Leadership

A Journey Toward World Peace

Volume 2

Spirituality Builds Happiness, Greatness, and Leadership

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Cover Credit: "Horizons," a masterpiece of Francisco Antonio Cano, a Colombian painter

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All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

This beautiful painting on the cover of this series is called "Horizons," a masterpiece of Francisco Antonio Cano, a Colombian painter. It summarizes the journey proposed by this book as the family are migrants journeying toward a better future. Their journey is the result of their spirituality, greatness and leadership.

The painting reflects wisdom: with a contemplative attitude, in silence, building consciousness. It reflects transcendence: they appreciate beauty, goodness, and truth, a life journey, walking toward love; they are builders of transcendence, creators of beauty, goodness, and truth: his finger pointing at the sky resembles God's creation of Adam in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. It reflects that they have transcendence, higher-level values: his right-hand holds an ax, a symbol of a worker. It reflects religiosity: they resemble the Holy Family in their journey to Egypt; they reflect the loving presence of God; they are building a relationship with God in their striving for a better life, a better world. It reflects relationships: their family is a community of love. It reflects having a meaning in life: they accept sacrifices, suffering, and efforts toward an ideal. It reflects discernment: they meditate and ponder, integrating all the dimensions of life before deciding on the next step. It reflects transformation: they are journeying to create a new life, new communities, a new vocation, a new home. It reflects social action: a couple caring for their family and community.

The painting reflects their leadership: they have a vision of the future of society, promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth; they have a mission, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society; they reflect relationships, a small community, marching to join a larger community that shares their vision and mission; they are making meaningful decisions, based on discernment; they are transforming, executing social actions.

This painting is located at the Museo de Antioquía in Medellin, Colombia.

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PREFACE

This book reflects a personal journey that any of us may have experienced.

Like many, I struggled with the complexities of life, the many challenges we all face every day.

Spirituality has played an extraordinary role in my life. It has helped me deal with complexities and challenges; it has helped me learn, value life, build relationships, find peace, make decisions, deal with suffering, find meanings, and heal my soul. Spirituality has helped me to grow, mature, and be happy.

Although many spiritual experiences have marked me, a couple of them had particular relevance.

When I was 18, a monk of a Benedictine monastery in countryside Argentina shared a small book, *The Way of the Pilgrim*, a jewel of Christian spirituality. This book introduces ceaseless prayer, silent prayer, meditation and contemplation, great sources of peace and daily spirituality that became part of my life.

During my '30s, I discovered Saint John of the Cross. His works continued the contemplative journey that *The Way of the Pilgrim* initiated. Saint John presents a complete spiritual journey, appreciating God's presence in the creation and our lives, leading to knowing and loving him.

When I turned 40, I decided to dedicate my life to understanding the impact of spirituality on our lives, especially on the lives of vulnerable and suffering people.

I wanted to follow a real-life, practical, concrete approach relevant to everyone living in the real world dealing with the complexities of life.

This required ample study and research: I completed three doctoral dissertations, three master's degrees, and three postgraduate programs in spirituality, philosophy/ethics, economics, management, international business administration, and finance.

This book is the outcome of that journey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of a long journey; I want to thank many friends who helped me in that journey.

First, my family, Gabriela, Gabi, Santiago, for everything that I have learned from them and for their sacrifices and patience during so many years of study and research. Gabi supported me in the complexities of processing the statistical analyses of this book.

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John Main, Lawrence Freeman, and Gene Bebeau (World Community of Christian Meditation) for their extraordinary wisdom on the value of spirituality.

Leif Edvinsson, the global giant and pioneer in Intellectual Capital, spent days with me in Stockholm and Sao Paulo with extraordinary generosity.

Many friends and colleagues at the University of North Florida, for their guidance and support: Jeff Steagall, Earle Traynham, Adel el-Ansary, Gene Baker, Cheryl Van Deusen.

INTRODUCTION

This book is the second of the four-volume series, *Leadership: A Journey Toward World Peace*.

Volume 1 summarizes the three volumes. Volume 2 shows how our spirituality builds greatness and leadership, and how they help us to be happier. Volume 3 discusses how our spirituality, greatness, and leadership have a positive impact on the political economy by providing resources that promote economic growth and social justice. Volume 4 discusses how our spirituality, greatness, and leadership have a positive impact on the business world by providing resources that promote organizational success and social well-being.

The purpose of this second volume is to invite us on a journey to discover how spirituality builds greatness and leadership, which are crucial to our happiness and the success of society.

This journey promotes experiential learning, relying on our personal experience and the experience of others.

It invites us to exercise our spirituality at any time of the day, when we work, when we are alone or with others, having a positive impact on us and society: our spirituality helps us to build knowledge and wisdom (chapter I); it helps us to live our lives as a journey toward transcendence, beauty, goodness, truth, and love (chapter II); it helps us to connect internally and with others, discovering that we have beauty, goodness, truth and love, discovering values (chapter III); it helps us to connect with the superior being, God, enjoying his loving presence and building a relationship with him (chapter IV); it helps us to build relationships, communities (chapter V); it helps us to find meaning in our lives and deal with suffering (chapter VI), to build discernment (chapter VII); it helps us to transform (chapter VIII), heal ourselves (chapter IX), and take social action and drive social change (chapter X). These are dimensions of our spirituality, greatness, and leadership.

Living our spirituality can be a life-changing experience, helping us to be happier and to build greatness and leadership, a path toward world peace.

How to read this book

Many readers do not have time to read a book as long as this one. If that is your case, I recommend you start reading the first volume, which summarizes the main ideas of the three volumes, and then read the introductions to every chapter of this volume which summarize them.

This volume has three sources of learning: it invites us to learn from our own experience; it draws on sources, showing the thinking of the best; and it draws on people who researched and explained them. This can provide us with various perspectives, enriching our learning.

In this exercise of drawing on the sources, this volume has more than 700 citations and references. It is not necessary to read them all; they are like an encyclopedia—it is good to know that what you read is not based on personal opinions, but on the thinking of the best. In this way, this volume offers some jewels that you may enjoy in your experiential journey.

To learn how to exercise our capacity to meditate and contemplate, chapter I presents several authors; one of them, a little jewel of Christian spirituality, *The Way of the Pilgrim* (which can be downloaded for free online),[1] is a great way to learn the "Prayer of the heart" to experience silent spirituality, making it part of our daily lives. Twentieth-century Christian Meditation deepens the practice of contemplative prayer.

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[1] Also called *The Way of a Pilgrim,* a version of the text is available online in English at https://desertfathers.webs.com/thewayofthepilgrim.htm and in Russian at https://www.ccel.org/contrib/ru/Strannik/Strannik.htm

To learn how to exercise our life as a journey toward love, the discussions on Saint John of the Cross' *A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ* in chapters I, II, and IV (the Canticle can be downloaded free online in English and Spanish)[2] are a great way. To better understand the Spiritual Canticle, the discussion of Solomon's Song of Songs in chapter IV provides a beautiful description of our life as a journey toward love.

To learn how to exercise our daily spirituality and discernment, chapter VI provides a profound way based on Saint Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*.

To learn how to find the meaning of our life and deal with suffering, or to help others, chapter VII provides extraordinary wisdom.

To experience the transformational dimension of spirituality, chapter VIII provides valuable insights.

Be patient, as any exercise most likely at first will seem dry and fruitless; you need to read and practice them a few times, and after a while, they will change your life.

I hope you enjoy them.

Defining spirituality

This book defines spirituality based on its results: our contemplative capacity, awareness, connectivity, knowledge, and wisdom to walk a path towards transcendence, to create transcendence, discover our values, create love, to have a loving relationship with God and build our relationship with Him, to build relationships, to discover meanings, to transform suffering, to build discernment and the power to transform, heal, and execute social actions.

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[2] See https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf for the English version and https://www.santateresadejesus.com/wp-content/uploads/San-Juan-de-la-Cruz-Canto-Espiritual-A.pdf and https://www.santateresadejesus.com/wp-content/uploads/San-Juan-de-la-Cruz-Canto-Espiritual-B.pdf for the Spanish version.

Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold[3] state the complexity of defining spirituality: "it is a vague word, often used with no clear meaning, or with a wide and vague significance." They present a genesis of the word spirituality:

- In English tradition, it means the clergy, the ecclesiastical office; it contrasts things from spirit (spirit, ghost, soul) with things from matter.
- In the French tradition, it is connected with mysticism, asceticism, prayerful piety, and inner or interior life.
- During the 20th. century, spirituality was more connected with the psychological and experiential counterpart of theology, a "Spirituality for today," connected with the life of prayer, with life in general, wholeness, and the search for meaning in human existence, as all human existence has a spiritual aspect.

Walter Principe[4] presents probably the best effort to define spirituality. He argues that the term spirituality should distinguish three different levels:

> The first is the real or existential level. It is the way some person understood and lived, within his or her historical context, a chosen religious ideal in sensitivity to the realm of the spirit or the transcendent.

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[3] Jones, Cheslyn; Wainwright, Geoffrey; Yarnold, S.J., Edward. *The study of spirituality*. Oxford University Press. 1986. New York. Oxford. Preface.

[4] Principe, Walter. *Toward defining spirituality*. Fourteenth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions. Winnipeg. August. 1980. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/000842988301200201?journalCode=sira

> The second level of spirituality is the formulation of a teaching about the lived reality, often under the influence of some outstanding spiritual person.
>
> A third level of spirituality is the study by scholars of the first and especially of the second levels of spirituality. Here spirituality has become a discipline using the methods and resources of several other branches of knowledge.[5]

Principe concludes that "spirituality points to those aspects of a person's living faith or commitment that concern their striving to attain the highest ideal or goal."

Spirituality in past times

Bernard McGinn[6] starts his extraordinary work on Western mysticism, describing how the Greek's contemplative ideal had a profound impact on Western spirituality: Plato's conception of the presence of the divine in human realities and Aristotle's first cause and the need for contemplation to reach asceticism, virtues, and happiness.

According to McGinn:

> Plato views the true human subject, the soul, as a searcher always restless short of permanent possession of the Absolute Good which beatifies. Such possession is achieved through contemplation, which is the fruit of and ascending purification (asceticism) of both love and knowledge and

[5] Ibid. pp 135-136

[6] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. pp. 25

> which reaches its goal when the divine element in the soul, is assimilated with its supernal source.[7]

Plato conceives of spirituality as a road to transcendence. Through contemplation, spirituality involves the journey from worldly goodness and beauty toward transcendental goodness and beauty. The 'Allegory of the Cave' describes that journey. This understanding of spirituality impacted "apophatic" spirituality.

Spirituality is many times linked with asceticism. "Askesis" in Greek means: exercise. Asceticism considers spirituality a personal effort to reinforce a spiritual journey, get rid of bad habits, control passions, order daily life, practice virtues, purify the person, and cope with the sacrifices of life such as work, responsibilities, and suffering.

For the Greeks, asceticism referred to the methodical physical preparation of athletes and soldiers to shape their will, the intellectual discipline of philosophers, and the practice of piety and religion by priests. Philosophical awakening requires asceticism.

Asceticism is also part of Hinduism to identify the sources of suffering through Yoga.

Asceticism is part of Buddhism, of its doctrine of non-attachment that requires being free from needs. The practice of meditation, which is the backbone of the Eight Noble Truths, leads to a balanced life that requires some degree of asceticism.

For many, spirituality is contrasted with materiality, a modern trend in which economic success is the primary goal.

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange[8] explains how meditation is linked with asceticism, the soul's opening to experience the spiritual reality, the admiration and affection that reality produces. Instead, contemplation is infused by God with spiritual graces, knowledge, and love,

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[7] Ibid. pp. 25-26.

[8] Garrigou-Lagrange O.P., Reginald. *Christian perfection and contemplation, according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross.* Tan books and publishers, inc. Rockford, Illinois. 2003.

the transformation of the person, profound humility, continuous prayer, virtues, love, hope, faith, and union with God.

Spirituality in modernity

Kees Waaijman[9] explains how spirituality is part of people's lives, like a silent force, an inspiration, an orientation.

Waaijman[10] explains how spirituality has three main approaches: Biblical (history and arts), fundamental (philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, cosmology, anthropology), and practical (sociology, psychology, management sciences, medical sciences, pedagogical sciences). According to who provides that definition, there are multiple definitions of spirituality: more theological, more religious, more psychological, more moral, etc. Those approaches do not preclude each other. For example, spirituality can be viewed as religious and psychological; the practice of religious spirituality may have a psychological impact and vice-versa.

As Waaijman describes, spirituality must integrate all those approaches; in that regard, spirituality can be considered an entire discipline. According to Waaijman, the core of spirituality is bipolar: how a person has a relationship with a transcendent being, a superior being, a deity, and how such relationship drives a process of transformation (discovery, development, journey, elevation).

Louis Bouyer[11] discusses what spirituality means by analyzing the difference between religious life, spiritual life, and interior life. A religious life refers to the relationship with a superior being, transcendent deity, or a god, even if the relationship is reflected only in behav-

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[9] Waaijman, Kees. "Spirituality as theology." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2011. Leuven. Belgium. p. 35.

[10] Ibid. p. 35.

[11] Bouyer, Louis. *Introduction to spirituality*. Liturgical Press. Minnesota. 1961.

iors. A spiritual life with no God refers to the detachment from religion found in Buddhism, detachment from all beings, cosmic, human, or divine. An interior life refers to aspects related to the soul, connection with our consciousness, emotional aspects such as poetry, music, and consciousness, connected with dreams. However, it may not be necessarily spiritual. A genuinely spiritual life somehow implies some degree of connection among them all.

Bouyer explains how consciousness helps connect the different views of spirituality. According to Bouyer, "it is impossible to separate subjective psychology from the objects toward it is oriented," the concept of "intentionality."

This explains why a religious understanding of spirituality is intrinsically connected with a psychological understanding of spirituality. Similarly, since spirituality is connected with consciousness, it can impact behaviors, introducing the insights of moral philosophy. Also, spirituality is connected with religion, leading to the introduction of fundamental theology, which also impacts moral dimensions.

Defining happiness

What is the primary purpose of our lives?

For Aristotle, the highest good is human happiness. External goods do not produce happiness but can be means toward happiness. Happiness is produced by personal daily activity, the vegetative life that people have in common with plants, and the sensible life that people have in common with animals, but above all, on a life based on intellectual and moral virtues.

Peter Redpath summarizes happiness as "an internal way of existing, not in the way of having anything or everything; as total self-sufficiency (lacking in nothing really good); as complete internal and

external well-being; the inability to be harmed by bad luck; and a perfect satisfaction of human nature."[12]

> Because human happiness consists in being totally perfect in human nature, human happiness must consist in: 1) an activity, because each thing is perfect inasmuch as it is actual, not potential; 2) an activity perfectly satisfying the person as a composite whole (intellect, will, and glorified body); 3) an activity of delight (enjoyment of the will/volitional satisfaction) in the knowledge of achieving perfect union with the whole of Truth: Perfect Enjoyment of the Beauty of Perfect Good and Truth; 4) a contemplative activity satisfying the whole person, not just the human soul—a perfection of the soul overflowing into the body consisting in perfect vision of God's essence.[13]
>
> Having shown that happiness is an activity in accord with virtue, according to Saint Thomas, next Aristotle shows how happiness is: 1) an activity in accord with the highest human virtue; 2) is the best of all human goods, the chief goal of all human goods (all of them being inclined, like tools, to generate it); 3) the best activity of the best part of a person; 4) the active human life directed by the highest virtue proper to the highest faculty, and accompanied by the highest joy; 5) an activity flowing from the highest habit of the highest human faculty; and 6) a contemplative, speculative, activity of wisdom, science, and understanding of truth.[14]

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[12] Redpath, Peter. *The Moral Psychology of St. Thomas Aquinas An Introduction to Ragamuffin Ethics*. Adler-Aquinas Institute Special Series. Volume Three. En Route Books & Media. 2015. St. Louis, MO. p. 113.

[13] Ibid. p. 114.

[14] Ibid. pp. 493-494.

Spirituality promotes happiness

Bernard McGinn[15] shows the connection between spirituality and happiness. McGinn describes the Greek contemplative ideal, especially Plato's conception of the divine's presence in human realities and Aristotle's need for contemplation to reach virtues and happiness.

Bonaventure explains how human beings desire knowledge, happiness, and peace:

> Naturally man desires knowledge, happiness and peace; knowledge, since we see his thought curiously investigating the sources of things; happiness, since each man and indeed each animal acts with a view to procuring a good or avoiding an evil; peace since the pursuit of knowledge or that of happiness are not followed simply for the sake of the pursuit but in order that the desire in which it is born may be appeased by the calm and the repose that follow from the attainment by a movement of its end. This love of peace, then, is as the perfection and the completion of the other two.[16]

Apophatic spirituality, the "via negativa," is an extraordinary road to happiness, making inner silence, living in the present, eliminating disturbing thoughts about the past and the future, and contemplating the beauty of the world, of the creation, of people.

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[15] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York.

[16] Gilson, Etienne. *The philosophy of St. Bonaventure*. Translated from the French by Dom Illtyd Trethowan Monk of Downside Abbey and Frank]. Sheed. Published by St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N. J. Distributed by Desclee Co. 1965. Paris, Tournai, New York, Rome. p. 79.

Meditation is an invitation to mindfulness, a road to happiness, valuing oneself and others, healing the soul, and building communities.

Defining greatness

Greatness refers to the dimensions, size, and degree of something. In this book, greatness refers to the dimensions of a person in terms of their being, soul, spirit, nature, faculties, personality, emotions, resources, abilities, power, decisions, actions, behaviors, virtues, ethics, outcomes, which this book summarizes as knowledge, transcendence, beauty, goodness, truth, values, love, relationships, meanings, discernment, power to transform, heal and execute social actions.

Some definitions support this intuition:

- Collins Dictionary. You use great to describe something that is very large. Great is more formal than big. Great means large in amount or degree. You can describe someone who is successful and famous for their actions, knowledge, or skill as great. The greats in a particular subject or field of activity are the people who have been most successful or famous in it. If you describe someone or something as great, you approve of them or admire them. You use great in order to emphasize the size or degree of a characteristic or quality. You say great in order to emphasize that you are pleased or enthusiastic about something.
- The Britannica Dictionary: very large in size: very big; very large in amount or extent; very strong; better than good: such as of the highest quality, very important and admired, very talented or successful.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary: the quality or state of being great (as in size, skill, achievement, or power). Synonyms for greatness:

choiceness, distinction, excellence, excellency, first-rateness, perfection, preeminence, primeness, superbness, superiority, supremacy.

- Cambridge Dictionary: importance and fame, power, or success; the large amount, size, or degree of something; the very good quality of something.
- Oxford Learner's Dictionary: the quality of being extremely good in ability or quality and therefore admired by many people.

MotivateUs.com "publishes motivational and inspirational quotes, stories and inner feelings from people across the world."[17] Rich Barnes, the editor of the website discusses:

> What is a great person? This is a question that I was asked by one of my readers. It is a very good question that I pondered for quite some time, with so many answers going through my mind.
>
> I feel that a great person is a person of integrity and values that he or she will never compromise. He or she is a great family man or woman who puts their family first and would protect them with their own life.
>
> A great person is willing to help anyone that needs it. Come torrential downpours or Nor'easter snowstorms, they are there when called. Always helping and never hurting.
>
> A great person is respectful of other people's feelings and needs, but holds his or her position highly and never retreats from negative situations, but only stays in them to make peace.
>
> A great person will allow nothing to stand in his or her way of doing the right thing by everyone and will always admit wrong with an apology.
>
> A great person is a father or mother who will sacrifice, whatever needs sacrificing, to do what is best for their children. They

[17] https://motivateus.com/about/

realize that children are our future and our future is in their hands.

A great person is a person who never hurts anyone's feelings intentionally and if they do it unknowingly, will humbly apologize, put out the fire and then work it out.

A great person will always be on time and never late. Frequent tardiness to an appointment or anything that has a structured time frame is unacceptable, and if it does happen, offer that apology and never let it happen again.

A great person is a provider... A provider to their family and the foundation on which the family lies. He or she never will let cracks form in their foundation and compromise the structural integrity of it.

A great person is a giver, and not a taker... A forgiver and not a resentment holder... A peacemaker and not a fighter.

A great person is a teacher, a fireman, a policeman, a nurse, a soldier, a volunteer, a case worker or a dss worker, or many more occupations of helping people.

A great person is a person that fails time after time while doing their best and never, ever quits because when they quit, part of them dies when they quit.

A great person will always put the needs of others in front of their own. Always being kind and never showing anger.

A great person has dreams and goals and never let's other people's negativity get in their way of pursuing them.[18]

Defining leadership

There are multiple definitions of leadership. According to Bickes and Yilmaz:

[18] https://motivateus.com/stories/what-is-a-great-person.htm

> Leadership is the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts and influencing others to achieve common goals. Leadership represents a process, while the leader refers to an individual.
>
> A leader can be defined as an individual who changes the paradigms of people, creates a vision, motivates followers with internal resources, engrains the idea that everyone has something to contribute to the shared goal, leads them and directly affects the flow of events and results.[19]

Hiebert and Klatt define leaders based on:

> Success based on innovation and adaptation; vision and values; energy; lives vision and purpose; models values; does the right things; leadership at all levels, everyone strategic; measurement of results; long-term results, big picture emphasized; systems, aligning the whole, intuitive; "heart stuff" (e.g., morale, commitment); inspires, creates new ways, coaches, mentors; multiple, situational leadership roles and styles; principles; sets context, pays attention to process; everyone responsible for quality; customer-focused; individual and team effort and reward; all together know best; success as the success of others; best for organization in society.[20]

Bass presents a definition of leadership:

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[19] Bickes, D. Mehmet; Yilmaz, Celal. *Leadership theories. A Handbook of Leadership Styles*. Edited by Ozgur Demirtas, Co-edited by Mustafa Karaca. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2020. p 1.

[20] Hiebert, Murray; Klatt, Bruce. The encyclopedia of leadership a practical guide to popular leadership theories and techniques. McGraw-Hill. 2001. p. 5.

> Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of the members. Leaders are agents of change—persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group.[21]
>
> Leadership has been conceived as the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as initiation of structure, and as many combinations of these definitions.

Armstrong summarizes different definitions of leadership:

> Leadership can be described as the ability to persuade others willingly to behave differently. It is the process of influencing people – getting them to do their best to achieve a desired result. It involves developing and communicating a vision for the future, motivating people and securing their engagement. Other definitions (there are many) include:
>
> Bennis and Nanus (1985). Leadership is: 'the capacity to translate intentions into reality and sustain it'.
>
> Dixon (1994). 'Leadership is no more than exercising such an influence upon others that they tend to act in concert toward achieving a goal which they might not have achieved so readily had they been left to their own devices.'

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[21] Nohria, Nitin; Khurana, Rakesh. Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice. An HBS Centennial Colloquium on Advancing Leadership. Harvard Business School Publishing. 2010. p 122.

> Buchanan and Huczynski (2007). Leadership is: 'the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement'.
>
> Goleman (2000). 'A leader's singular job is to get results.'[22]

Bass starts the exercise of defining leadership by summarizing its chaotic evolution:

> Representative of definitions of leadership in the 1920s was impressing the will of the leader on those led and inducing obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation. In the 1930s, leadership was considered a process through which the many were organized to move in a specific direction by the leader. In the 1940s, leadership was the ability to persuade and direct beyond the effects of power, position, or circumstances. In the 1950s, it was what leaders did in groups and the authority accorded to leaders by the group members. In the 1960s, it was influence to move others in a shared direction. In the 1970s, the leader's influence was seen as discretionary and as varying from one member to another. In the 1980s, leadership was considered as inspiring others to take some purposeful action. In the 1990s, it was the influence of the leader and the followers who intended to make real changes that reflected their common purposes. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the leader is seen as the person most responsible and accountable for the organization's actions. McFarland, Senn, and Childress considered six themes of leadership most appropriate for the twenty-first century: (1) Leadership is no longer the exclusive domain of the top boss. (2) Leadership facilitates excellence in others. (3) Leadership is not

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[22] Armstrong, Michael. *Armstrong's Handbook of Management and Leadership. Developing effective people skills for better leadership and management*. Cenveo Publisher Services. 2012. pp. 4, 5.

> the same as management. (4) Leadership has a sensitive, humanistic dimension. (5) Leaders need to take a holistic approach, applying a variety of qualities, skills, and capabilities. (6) Leadership is the mastery of anticipating, initiating, and implementing change.[23]

Bass highlights some "'Leadercentric' definitions of leaders and leadership: the leader as a personality, leadership as an attribution, leaders as the foci of group processes, the leader as a symbol, leadership as the making of meaning, leadership of thought, leadership as purposive behavior, leadership as persuasive behavior, leadership as the initiation of structure (relationships), leadership as the exercise of influence, leadership as discretionary influence, leadership as the art of inducing compliance."[24]

Bass presents the view of leadership as a process, which is the main intuition presented in this book:

> This definition of leadership as a process is becoming increasingly popular. It concerns the cognitions, interpersonal behaviors, and attributions of both the leaders and the followers as they affect each others' pursuit of their mutual goals […] Yukl (1994) defined leadership in organizations as influence processes that interpret events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or organization, the organization of work to accomplish the objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships and teamwork, and the enlisting of outsiders to support and cooperate with the group or organization.[25]

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[23] Bass, Bernard M.; Bass, Ruth. The Bass Handbook of Leadership. Theory, research, and managerial applications. Fourth Edition. Free Press. 2008. p 41.

[24] Ibid. pp. 41-46.

[25] Ibid. 2008. p 47.

Alvesson goes a step further in the understanding of leadership as a process, stressing the interaction between leadership and organizational culture:

> Organizational culture is one of the major themes in academic research and education in organization theory as well as in management practice. There are good reasons for this: the cultural dimension is central in all aspects of organizational life.
>
> Culture then is central in governing the understanding of behaviour, social events, institutions and processes. It refers to the setting in which these phenomena become comprehensible and meaningful. Culture is regarded as a more or less cohesive system of meanings and symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place, while the social structure is regarded as the behavioural patterns which the social interaction itself gives rise to. In the case of culture, then, we have a frame of reference of beliefs, expressive symbols and values, by means of which individuals define their environment, express their feelings and make judgements. In the latter case, that is to say at the social level, we have a continuous process of interaction.[26]

Alvesson concludes by highlighting the role of shared meanings:

> A cultural understanding of leadership calls for appreciating local shared meanings associated with the context of leadership relations and acts. Leadership can be defined as about influencing the construction of reality – the ideas, beliefs and interpretations of what and how things can and should be done, in the light

[26] Alvesson, Mats. Leadership and Organizational Culture. The SAGE Handbook of Leadership. Edited by Alan Bryman, David Collinson, Keith Grint, Brad Jackson and Mary Uhl-Bien. SAGE Publications. 2011. p 153.

> of what the world looks like. A cultural understanding of leadership calls for the nuanced interpretation of the relationship and context of interaction between superior and subordinate.[27]

Leaders influence the entire organization, promoting leadership everywhere and transforming each member of the organization into a leader.

Leadership as abilities driven by greatness

Leadership is an ability, a resource that persons or communities have, to lead members of an organization toward certain ideals. Ability is "the power or skill to do something,"[28] "the quality or skill that you have which makes it possible for you to do something,"[29] and "the physical or mental power or skill needed to do something."[30]

Leadership is:

1. **The ability to create a vision of the future of society, promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth.**

   The vision refers to a future ideal, which may remain an ideal for many years, probably forever.

   There is a universal consensus that "…leaders create a vision and can successfully get others to work toward achieving that goal…."[31]

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[27] Ibid. p 161.

[28] The Britannica Dictionary. https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/ability

[29] Collins Dictionary. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/ability

[30] Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/ability

[31] https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/leadership

This definition of leadership is intimately connected with the dimensions of greatness discussed in previous chapters: the vision is related to the first two dimensions discussed in previous chapters: knowledge and transcendence.

Our greatness empowers our visions, raising the bar: promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, truth, and "participating" in God's reality toward perfection.

2. The ability to build missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society.

While the vision speaks of a future ideal, the mission speaks of our present, how we walk toward that ideal, our values, and our commitment toward that ideal. The word "mission" is related to a missionary who desires to transform the world, wants to do something valuable for the world, and is willing to walk toward an ideal world.

Several authors concur that the vision must inspire missions, influence and motivate others:

- "Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal."[32]
- "Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal."[33]
- "Leadership builds ownership, shapes culture."[34]

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[32] https://www.thebalancesmb.com/leadership-definition-2948275

[33] https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/?sh=369521015b90

[34] https://holdsworthcenter.org/blog/leadership-definition-is-game-changer/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwuMuRBhCJARIsAHXdnqPzVB78opHjFrHOE-WOfZKvjJN9Hx2CtYWg78AfLr5aI4CKrlfhZAqcaAn_QEALw_wcB

The mission is related to the third and fourth dimensions of greatness: values and religiosity. Our greatness empowers our missions, values, purpose in life, role in society, vocation, will, commitment, identity, providing valuable resources for society, energy, and motivation to impact society positively.

3. The ability to build relationships and communities, promoting social engagement.

The modern understanding of leadership relates to someone who can promote leaders throughout the organization to develop their visions and missions; a leader must communicate, motivate, empower, and transform others into leaders.

Several authors propose intuitions that highlight the central role of the leader to build community and relationships that share the vision and mission:

- "Leadership is helping people succeed, inspiring and uniting people behind a common purpose and then being accountable."[35]
- "Leadership is the ability to inspire a team to achieve a certain goal."[36]
- "Leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization."[37]
- "Leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less."[38]

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[35] https://medium.com/jacob-morgan/14-top-ceos-share-their-definition-of-leadership-whats-yours-2b89a58576a6

[36] https://www.tonyrobbins.com/what-is-leadership/

[37] https://extension.sdstate.edu/what-definition-leadership

[38]https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/?sh=369521015b90

- "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others."[39]
- "Leadership is about helping others realize their potential and inspiring them to work with you to achieve a shared vision for the future."[40]
- "Leaders align talent systems."[41]
- "Leaders listen, equip others, appreciate others, develop persons, enlist others, develop relationships and service the members of their teams."[42]

Community is related to the fifth dimension of greatness: relationships.

Our greatness enriches our relationships and communities with God (for religious persons) and with others, promoting social engagement: the power to communicate, build emotional intelligence, reach the hearts of others, inspire, to build community, teams, and relationships.

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[39] https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/?sh=369521015b90

[40] https://medium.com/jacob-morgan/14-top-ceos-share-their-definition-of-leadership-whats-yours-2b89a58576a6

[41] https://holdsworthcenter.org/blog/leadership-definition-is-game-changer/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwuMuRBhCJARIsAHXdnqPzVB78opHjFrHOE-WOfZKvjJN9Hx2CtYWg78AfLr5aI4CKrlfhZAqcaAn_QEALw_wcB

[42] https://nlctb.org/tips/7-traits-of-emotionally-intelligent-leaders/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwuMuRBhCJARIsAHXdnqPCTu5v6rrh4tWVRVz2SOtk-IpFP-Zx9HFRDZ_op-GEzIlPwXgIEgxMaAsnFEALw_wcB

4. The ability to make meaningful decisions based on discernment.

Modern decision-making refers to how an organization can define objectives, strategies, necessary resources, and expected results to transform the ideal into reality.

Modern strategic management relies on critical thinking to make decisions, on the ability to analyze the system, the reality, the strategies, the results, and establishing the rational connection between them to ensure the organization's success.

Volume 4, "A leadership culture transforms decision-making, promoting organizational success and social well-being," analyzes this process in detail, showing that critical thinking does not guarantee the best outcomes for society.

This is a central competence of a leader: "The most basic definition of leadership is you set the destination. You come up with a strategy to get to that destination and do your best to align and supply the resources to make that happen."[43]

Discernment relates to the sixth and seventh dimensions of greatness: meanings and discernment.

Our greatness empowers our ability to find meaning, make meaningful decisions, and discern.

5. The ability to transform, heal, execute social actions, and drive social change.

As some authors define:

- "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."[44]

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[43] https://medium.com/jacob-morgan/14-top-ceos-share-their-definition-of-leadership-whats-yours-2b89a58576a6

[44] https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/?sh=369521015b90

- "I define leadership as making a positive impact on people; employees, shareholders, customers, business partners and the public at large."[45]
- "Make setting audacious goals a fundamental belief. Do things, as John F. Kennedy famously said, 'not because they are easy, because they are hard'."[46]
- "Leadership stands for progress, empowerment, empathy and trust. At a time of too many cynics who throw up their hands and cry, "impossible," I employ optimism, the only free stimulus in this world."[47]

Transformation is related to the last three dimensions of greatness: transformation, healing, and social action.

Our greatness empowers our ability to transform persons and communities, heal, execute social actions, and drive social change.

This definition of leadership is aligned with the definitions of leadership defined above:

- Leadership is a resource: an ability, a capacity, a process.
- Leadership is a process that starts with cognitions that may be generated by a person or by the community, affecting interpersonal behaviors and impacting each other.
- Leadership promotes organizational values, motivation, commitment, engagement, and energy.
- Visions and values help to build meanings to interpret reality.

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45 https://medium.com/jacob-morgan/14-top-ceos-share-their-definition-of-leadership-whats-yours-2b89a58576a6

46 https://medium.com/jacob-morgan/14-top-ceos-share-their-definition-of-leadership-whats-yours-2b89a58576a6

47 https://medium.com/jacob-morgan/14-top-ceos-share-their-definition-of-leadership-whats-yours-2b89a58576a6

- Values generate relationships, building committed communities.
- Values, meanings, and relationships create an organizational culture, which builds a cohesive community with predictable behaviors.
- Values lead to change, to transform reality.
- Vision and values promote ethics, virtues, behaviors, and results, oriented to the community, with a sensitive, humanistic dimension.

I.

SPIRITUALITY ENRICHES OUR KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the first dimension of the greatness that spirituality builds in every person and community: knowledge and wisdom. The wisdom that spirituality builds is an extraordinary source of happiness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter is the foundation of the following chapters: our wisdom enlightens and promotes our capacity to transcend, to create beauty, goodness, and truth, our capacity to discover values, to build relationships, to make discerning decisions, to find meaning in our lives, to transform, to heal, and to execute social actions.

This chapter is important to the success of the political economy and strategic management: this organizational knowledge is the core of human capital, relationships are the core of social capital, and its transformative power is the core of the structural, process, and renewal capital: these capitals are the resources necessary for the success of nations and business organizations.

This chapter is also important for political economy because a realist epistemology reduces the social division and fragmentation generated by the opposition between cultural values, ideologies, and opposing political economy views.

World peace results from involving spirituality, consciousness, meditation, and contemplation in our knowledge creation, creating a richer knowledge with a human orientation, connecting us internally and with others, enhancing our perceptions, helping to know the truth, enriching our communication, integrating persons and communities, building shared knowledge and ideals among diversity and

complexity, generating emotional feelings, reducing personal and social fragmentation, promoting humanism, social integration, and social harmony, producing personal inner peace, and social peace and harmony.

Summary of the chapter

Any person, any community, can experience consciousness, meditation, and contemplation, which enhance our connectedness and awareness, enriching our knowledge and wisdom. As Louis Bouyer states, consciousness produces connectedness, connecting the person internally with others and with the world, integrating spirituality with psychology and morality, promoting virtues, social harmony, and happiness.

Spirituality is a unique path to happiness, making inner silence, living in the present, contemplating beauty, goodness, and truth, and eliminating disturbing thoughts about the past and the future. Since contemplation is the highest human operation, it leads to the highest happiness.

Meditation, contemplation, and awareness build knowledge and wisdom by connecting the person internally and with others, strengthening our ability to perceive phenomena and organize them, relying on personal and community knowledge: multiple information of objects, intuitions, symbols, metaphors, hermeneutics, analogies, affections, emotions, empathy, different perspectives of the same object, and different perceptions of people who can perceive reality in different ways.

Although the phenomena are diverse, they refer to the same reality, fostering shared knowledge between diversity and complexity, shared ideals, universal truths, facilitating communication, promoting social integration, and leading toward world peace. This helps to enrich and humanize our knowledge by knowing ourselves internally and others, leading to a better society and world peace.

Three types of spirituality influence knowledge differently: symbolic spirituality expresses realities by relying on symbols; cataphatic spirituality relies on affirmative discourse; apophatic spirituality relies on quiet and restful experiences.

Apophatic spirituality leads toward world peace by helping to perceive reality as a path to wholeness and social harmony (Eastern spirituality), to know and seek beauty, goodness, and truth (Greek philosophy), to understand physical, emotional and spiritual symbols (Origen of Alexandria), to find meaning (Saint Ambrose), to live a life of perfection (John Cassian), to know and experience reality (Saint Augustine), to know through personal awareness, connecting with our true self and with others (20th century Christian meditation).

Apophatic spirituality helps religious people to know and love God (New Testament), to live in the presence of God (John Cassian), takes people on a silent journey toward God (Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite) so that anyone can experience a contemplative life to meet, know and love him (Saint Gregory), to know him by spiritual senses and experiences (Saint Bernard), by perceptions, symbols and spiritual presence (Saint Francis), by contemplation, illumination and love (Bonaventure), by spiritual illumination leading to union with God (Meister Eckhart), so that active and contemplative persons can know God by a silent presence of love (The Cloud of Unknowing).

Cataphatic, apophatic and symbolic spiritualities lead to wisdom, incorporating intellectuality, affections, faith, mysticism (Saint Albert the Great), a path to truth and happiness (Saint Thomas Aquinas). These spiritualities lead us to know and love God by incorporating imagination into spiritual experiences (Ignatius of Loyola), leading to inflaming us in love (Saint John of the Cross), leading us to God through scriptural, faith-based knowledge and popular piety (Martin Luther), leading us to a personal relationship with God, and the church through scriptural and faith-based knowledge (John Calvin).

This is the foundation of our greatness: our wisdom enlightens and promotes our capacity to transcend, to create beauty, goodness, and truth, our capacity to discover values, to build relationships, to make discerning decisions, to find meaning in our lives, to transform, to heal and to execute social actions.

These are the pillars of our leadership, of our capacity to have a vision of the future, a mission based on values, the capacity to build relationships, to make decisions based on discernment, and to promote action and social change.

Three types of spirituality based on the knowledge involved

Spirituality relies on three paradigms: symbolic, cataphatic, and apophatic.

- Cataphatic spirituality relies on affirmative speaking, concepts, which express spiritual realities.
- Symbolic spirituality expresses spiritual realities relying on symbols, metaphors.
- Apophatic spirituality, the "via negativa," goes beyond the symbolic and the cataphatic spiritualities, beyond the symbols and the concepts. it relies on silent experiences, speechless, restful, the unknown, an invisible spiritual reality.

Apophatic spirituality

"Apophatic" is a Greek word that means "to deny," knowledge obtained by negation, from silence.

Buddhism practices apophatic spirituality through meditation.

Christian Orthodox spirituality practices apophatic spirituality through the "prayer of the heart," the endless repetition of "Lord, have mercy."

Modern Christian spirituality practices apophatic spirituality reflected in the Centering Prayer of Thomas Keating and the Christian Meditation of John Main and Lawrence Freeman.

Apophatic spirituality is an extraordinary road to happiness, making inner silence, living in the present, eliminating disturbing thoughts about the past and the future, and contemplating the world's beauty, of the creation, of people.

Kenneth Leech explains how meditation helps to take distance from the world to have a better perspective, listen to more voices, almost marginal to the system, at the periphery of the society, pushing the frontiers of human existence, striving to go beyond. Meditation leads to vision and clear insights, seeing a revolutionary view beneath the surface of events, beyond the immediate. "Injustice and social fragmentation are perpetuated through partial perception, an unwillingness and inability to see, and therefore to act." [1]

Eastern apophatic spirituality as the road to wholeness and social harmony

Hinduist apophatic spirituality. Mind's silence to perceive reality objectively, leading to wholeness

Rajendra P. Pandeva explains how Hindu spirituality relied on the "Veda," translated to "the knowledge of the truth;" those who rely on them are called "seers."[2] With a goal of knowledge, a vocation of truth, the "dharma" sustains all beings in harmony with each other. Knowledge also refers to the path toward wisdom and action, distinguishing what is true and right from false and evil, preserving

[1] Leech, Kenneth. *Soul friend.* Morehouse Publishing. 2001. Pennsylvania.

[2] Pandeva, Rajendra P. *The Vision of the Vedic Seer.* Hindu Spirituality. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. 1989. Delhi. India. pp. 5-6

the unity of life and nature. The enlightened mind connects with the inner self, with external spiritual realities, transforms the personal outlook, and empowers spirituality.

> Purity of mind helps one rise above the ceaseless conflicts and confusions of the unenlightened existence, and reach up to a state of creative unity of opposites, harmoniously held together.[3]
>
> The purity of heart gains a harmony between material-vital existence and psychical-intellectual existence, between action and understanding, as the path to knowledge of truth and the everlasting happiness.[4]

John G. Arapura explains how the Supreme Being and the spirit in the subjective self speak the same way, connecting through the same spiritual knowledge.[5] The term Upanisad, the spiritual knowledge, can be translated as "sitting devoutly nearby," describing the proximity between listeners and the Supreme Being; this leads to seeing, hearing, thinking, and contemplating the Supreme Being. Spiritual knowledge, spiritual dialogue, and awareness instruct us of who we are and our lives meaning.

According to Ravi Ravindra,[6] Yoga's purpose is to lead to the mind's silence, a prerequisite for perceiving reality objectively, without distortions. Yoga leads to a transformation, from a mind full of noise to a still mind. Yoga means to unite, to join together human

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[3] Ibid. p. 26

[4] Ibid. p. 26

[5] Arapura, John G. *Spirit and spiritual knowledge in the Upanisads*. Hindu Spirituality. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. 1989. Delhi. India. pp. 64-72

[6] Ravindra, Ravi. *Yoga: the royal path to freedom*. Hindu Spirituality. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. 1989. Delhi. India. p. 177.

and divine, similar to the meaning of "religion." Yoga leads to wholeness, integrating all aspects and levels of oneself. Yoga transforms the person from natural, ordinary, vulgar, and unrefined to well-made, well-put-together, freedom from nature, a flight to transcendence. Yoga is the removal of the fluctuations of consciousness.

Ravindra explains the eight limbs of Yoga: 1. Self-restraints, abstention from violence, falsehood, theft, incontinence, acquisitiveness; 2. Purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, devotion to the Lord; 3. Right posture, relaxed and alert; 4. Proper regulation of breathing for steadying and attention; 5. Inward turning of the senses, to be freed of the external impressions; 6. Concentration, consciousness bound to a single spot; 7. Contemplation or meditative absorption, flow of attention from the observer to the observed; 8. A state of silence, settled intelligence, emptied mind.

Buddhist apophatic spirituality. Meditation to know and discover the value of the person and community, the origin of love

Buddhism proposes a radical negative way through the practice of meditation, an apophatic spirituality, by making internal silence. Meditation leads to the discovery of the individual's true self, the value of every individual. Meditation helps the person perceive other people or the world and discover the value of others and the community; this is the origin of love, compassion, wisdom, justice, moderation, and integrity.

Meditation promotes non-attachment: 1. Right understanding or right view; 2. Right intention; 3. Right speech; 4. Right action; 5. Right livelihood; 6. Right effort; 7. Right mindfulness; 8. Right concentration.

Daoist apophatic spirituality. Silent spirituality to know and connect to reality as the road to happiness

Daoism also promotes an apophatic spirituality: in silence, while meditating, a woman pays attention to her breathing, to the air that has been around for millennia; she fills her lungs with that eternal air; she feels her heartbeats, how that air enters into her body, filling her body with the universe, with the eternity. She feels her energy, emotions, and feelings. She is connected to the earth, the universe, and humanity, filled with deep peace, beauty, and the universe's perfection. Daoist meditation is an invitation to mindfulness.

Meditation is a road to happiness, valuing oneself and others, healing the soul, and building communities.

Islamic apophatic spirituality. Meditation to know and connect to God and our surroundings

We can experience Islamic Sufi meditation, watching over our hearts, accessing the Creator's absolute transcendence and our surroundings.

Shia Islam believed in the negative way to access the absolute transcendence of the Creator; Maimonides (13^{th} – 14^{th} century) considered that trying to associate God with our limited conceptions would diminish our knowledge of God.

Greek philosophy's apophatic spirituality. Contemplation to know and seek beauty, goodness, truth

Plato's cave metaphor (c. 425 – c. 348 BC) describes human beings being prisoners in a cave.

The images we see are the shadows reflected by the fire's light on the cave's back.

The beauty produced by the One leads us to a journey of ascent toward absolute beauty, a natural attraction to absolute beauty, to contemplate such absolute beauty.

For Bernard McGinn, Plato sees the human soul as a restless searcher of the Absolute Good, based on contemplation, the fruit of an ascending purification (asceticism) of love and knowledge. The purification of love and knowledge requires moral and intellectual efforts.

The act of contemplation leads to the possession of the Good, the Beauty, which leads to happiness.

Contemplation involves an apophatic exercise, a "negative way," as the One is unknowable for our limited perceptions. The One is outside time, outside of any description or knowledge; it exceeds our senses and rational knowledge; it is identical to the Good and the Beauty.

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE – c. 50 CE), a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, merged Plato's contemplative views, the contemplation of Plato's transcendence as a road to know the One, as a journey of perfection toward the One, with the virtuous life of Stoicism, its asceticism, and with his Jewish notion of God as the Creator of the beauty.

Plotinus (204 – 270) completed the journey of apophatic spirituality. Everything emanated from the One, the Divine, the Beauty, the Good. Through contemplation, silent prayer, no thoughts, silently contemplating the perfection and beauty of the One, we discover the One and initiate a journey toward the transcendent One, a journey toward happiness, by way of purification, acquiring virtues, imitating the One, toward the union with the One.

Jewish spirituality. Reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation to understand the word of God in the Scriptures

Bouyer[7] describes how Judaism relied on the "Word of God" through the prophets, the wisdom, the apocalypse or revelation, and the scriptures.

According to Bernard McGinn,[8] for the Jews, God was in the temple and communicated personally with each person through prayer and the sacred scriptures that contained God's previous interaction with the patriarchs, the judges, and the prophets. An exegesis followed the readings with an interpretation of the Scriptures.

Kees Waaijman[9] explains how spirituality was practiced in 3 forms:

- Theological reflection is induced by poetry, myths, and poetic images which speak of divine-human reality.
- Piety, devotion to the gods, loyalty to the fatherland, family, friends, and the needy.
- Philosophy, rational thinking, and speaking about the divine.

These three forms interact with and enrich each other.

Waaijman[10] explains how the Jewish house of study (beth hamidrash) was a tradition that started during the exile and continued to protect the Jewish tradition. Christians inherited such practices as

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[7] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 3-34.

[8] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. pp. 9-22.

[9] Waaijman, Kees. "Spirituality as theology." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. 2011.

[10] Waaijman, Kees. "A hermeneutic of spirituality. A preliminary study." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium.

spiritual reading (Lectio Divina). Both "must be understood as 'places' where spiritual reading space is reserved."

Waaijman explains the hermeneutical process that the Jewish house of study and Christian spiritual reading generate:

1. Lectio and peshat, "Reading is an exercise of the outward senses": the reader and the scriptures are mutually involved in a hermeneutical process, how the text impacts the reader, the meanings of the text, the impact on the reader's reality, feelings, imagination, memories.
2. Meditatio and remez: "Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth," the hermeneutic process goes from reading to the interpretation of the meaning of the text, understanding the signs, the symbols, with a critical attitude.
3. Oratio and derash: "Meditation leads to prayer, […]prayer, in seeking and questioning God, directs itself to him […], prayer is longing […], is emotional […], listens to God speaking."
4. "Contemplatio as longing, as union, as absence." According to Waaijman, "Jerome views the reading of Scripture as 'the hoisting of the sails of the Holy Spirit without knowing on which shore we will."[11]

Waaijman summarizes this in the following sentence, presenting it as the first systematization of spirituality:

> Lectio, meditado, oratio, and contemplatio […] form the structure which continually energizes the reading process […]. For Guigo II, the four components are described for the first time as

[11] Ibid. p. 10.

four successive phases in the spiritual life, which 'both in temporal order and in their causality precede each other: reading is therefore an external exercise; meditation is accomplished inwardly by the intellect; prayer proceeds from desire; but contemplation exceeds all comprehension. The first step is for beginners; the second for the advanced; the third is practised by the totally dedicated; the fourth is for the elect'.[12]

The New Testament. Prayer without ceasing, contemplation to know and love the Father

The New Testament reflects the role of contemplation. Several passages show how Jesus prayed and contemplated:

- Mark 1:35. And rising very early, going out, he went into a desert place: and there he prayed.
- Mark 6:46. And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray.
- Mark 14:32. He saith to his disciples: Sit you here, while I pray.
- Mark 14:35. And when he was gone forward a little, he fell flat on the ground; and he prayed, that if it might be, the hour might pass from him.
- Mark 14:39. A going away again, he prayed.
- Luke 3:21. Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, heaven was opened.
- Luke 5:16. And he retired into the desert, and prayed.

[12] Waaijman, Kees. "Toward a phenomenological definition of spirituality." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 8.

- Luke 6:12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God.
- Luke 9:18. As he was alone praying.
- Luke 9:28. He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray.
- Luke 10:21. In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.
- Luke 11:1. He was in a certain place praying.
- Luke 22:32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.
- Luke 2:41. And his parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch.
- Luke 23:46. And Jesus crying out with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost.

Luke 10:38-42 shows how Jesus presents the centrality of contemplation above action: in Mary and Martha's episode, Mary chose the best part: contemplation.

- Romans 12:12. Rejoicing in hope. Patient in tribulation. Instant in prayer.
- Ephesians 6:18. By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints.
- Colossians 4:2. Be instant in prayer; watching in it with thanksgiving.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Pray without ceasing.

For Bernard McGinn, the scriptures show how Jesus used metaphors and symbols that required meditation and contemplation to be understood, like the Parable of the Sower. He shows how, for John, Jesus is the Word:

- John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

For McGinn, Paul stresses that knowledge plays a special role:

- John 10:14-15. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep.
- John 3:11. Amen, amen I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony.
- John 7:16. Jesus answered them, and said: My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.
- John 7:28-29. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching, and saying: You both know me, and you know whence I am: and I am not come of myself; but he that sent me, is true, whom you know not. I know him, because I am from him, and he hath sent me.
- Romans 11:33-34. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?
- 1 Corinthians 12:7-8. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom: and to another, the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit.

- 2 Corinthians 2:14-15. Now thanks be to God, who always maketh us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and manifesteth the odour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are the good odour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

According to McGinn, for John, Jesus is a source of light, which enlightens knowledge:

- John 1:7-9. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light. That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.
- 2 Corinthians 4:6. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus.

Several passages present the role of faith that leads to knowledge:

- John 12:44-46. But Jesus cried, and said: He that believeth in me, doth not believe in me, but in him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world; that whosoever believeth in me, may not remain in darkness.
- John 9:35-39. Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when he had found him, he said to him: Dost thou believe in the Son of God? He answered, and said: Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? And Jesus said to him: Thou hast both seen him; and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said: I believe, Lord. And falling down, he adored him. And

Jesus said: For judgment I am come into this world; that they who see not, may see; and they who see, may become blind. Louis Bouyer[13] shows how John stresses the knowledge of the Father and the Son:

- John 1:18. No one has ever seen God: but the only Son has made it known to us.
- John 10:14-15. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep.
- John 14:26. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.

The Holy Spirit as a source of knowledge, wisdom, inspiration

Several parts of the Bible present the Holy Spirit as a source of knowledge, understanding, wisdom:

- 2 Samuel 23:1-2. Now these are David's last words. David the son of Isai said: The man to whom it was appointed concerning the Christ of the God of Jacob, the excellent psalmist of Israel said: The spirit of the Lord hath spoken by me and his word by my tongue.
- Nehemiah 9:20. And thou gavest them thy good Spirit to teach them, and thy manna thou didst not withhold from their mouth, and thou gavest them water for their thirst.
- Isaiah 11:2. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of

[13] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. p. 125

counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness.

- Acts 28:25-27. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, Paul speaking this one word: Well did the Holy Ghost speak to our fathers by Isaias the prophet, Saying: Go to this people, and say to them: With the ear you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears have they heard heavily, and their eyes they have shut; lest perhaps they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
- 1 Corinthians 2:9-15. But, as it is written: That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him. But to us God hath revealed them, by this Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are given us from God. Which things also we speak, not in the learned words of human wisdom; but in the doctrine of the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined. But the spiritual man judgeth all things; and he himself is judged of no man.

Several parts of the Bible present the Holy Spirit as a source of inspiration and prophesy:

- Joel 3:1. For behold in those days, and in that time when I shall bring back the captivity of Juda and Jerusalem.
- Mark 13:11. And when they shall lead you and deliver you up, be not thoughtful beforehand what you shall speak; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost.
- Luke 12:12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you must say.
- Matthew 10:20. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.
- Mark 12:36. For David himself saith by the Holy Ghost: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.
- Acts 1:16. Men, brethren, the scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was the leader of them that apprehended Jesus.
- Acts 2:3-4. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.
- Acts 2:16-18. But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass, in the last days, (saith the Lord,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And upon my servants indeed, and upon my handmaids will I pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophesy.
- Acts 19:1-6. While Apollo was at Corinth, that Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, and

found certain disciples. And he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost And he said: In what then were you baptized? Who said: In John's baptism. Then Paul said: John baptized the people with the baptism of penance, saying: That they should believe in him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus. Having heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

- 2 Peter 1:21. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Clement of Alexandria. Faith precedes understanding

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – 215) followed Philo's Jewish Neoplatonism but also incorporated Christianity: he had a mystical view of the soul in a constant search of God, to assimilate God, to imitate God, to know an unknowable infinite God. This journey requires a personal purification effort: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8)."

As Glenn Hinsom states: "Like Augustine two centuries later, Clement insisted that faith must precede understanding; not established by logical proofs, indeed incapable of demonstration, understanding depends on free assent to the Word, the Instructor."[14]

Origen of Alexandria. Understanding physical, emotional, and spiritual symbols

[14] Magill, Frank N.; McGreal, Ian P, editors. *Christian Spirituality*. Harper Collins Publishers. 1988. p. 4

Origen of Alexandria (c. 184 – c. 253) was a pupil of Clement and merged Plato's philosophy with Christianity.

Origen provided intuitions that became part of the Christian spiritual tradition.

As Jean Faurot[15] explains, he deepened the Greek intuition of the threefold stages of the spiritual life: the purgative, which focused on ethics; the illuminative, which focused on affection and psychology; and the unitive, which focused on spiritual contemplation and union with the Divine, and he aligned them to the three books of the Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.

The most influential work of Origen for Christian spirituality was his "Commentary on the Song of Songs." From a Christian perspective, he provides an exegesis of Solomon's Song of Songs. In his Commentary, he relies on his three levels of interpretation: physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Bouyer explains how Origen introduced spiritual senses in his writings, relying on exegesis, symbols, allegories, and types to explain reality based on the scriptures: his exegesis became universal, proposing intuitions valid through all times.

According to McGinn, Origen introduced an extraordinary exegesis: for Origen, the understanding of the meaning of the cosmos requires relying on the scriptures as a source of wisdom: "Following Paul, Origen taught the necessity of advancing beyond the 'letter that kills', to the level of spiritual meaning by making use of the events and persons of the Old Testament as 'types' and 'allegories' of present realities."[16]

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[15] Ibid. pp. 8-9

[16] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. p. 111

The Fathers of the Desert. Silent spirituality based on continuous prayer

The Fathers of the Desert were monks who lived initially in the deserts of Egypt, starting in the third century. Anthony the Great initiated this early monasticism, which expanded throughout the Middle East and Europe.

Louis Bouyer explains the transition that Anthony (250 – 356) made from ordinary life to living a thoroughly evangelical life as the apostles leaving everything to follow Christ. The loneliness of the desert, liberating from everything to live a life of faith and constant prayer, helped him to reach a deeper consciousness, battling his internal demons, his obscure forces, to open war against the real demons, toward freedom, to spiritual paternity. A person must learn to be alone, know their heart, break the sources of superficial securities, confront iniquity, the spirit of evil, the darkness, the absence of light, and the absence of God. God seemed absent; however, He witnessed Anthony's fight, and He propelled Anthony's transformation.[17]

These early monastic communities practiced Hesychasm (stillness, simplicity, silence), continuous prayer, making interior silence, based on the Prayer of the Heart, or Jesus Prayer.

A famous little book, "The way of the pilgrim," a jewel of Christian spirituality, written in the 19th century, follows the Fathers of the Desert's tradition of ceaseless prayer based on the Prayer of the Heart. As Bill Gaultiere expresses:

> It is a heart-warming and unforgettable story of how God brought healing and transformation to a lonely, depressed man (...) to change the world. One day in the early 1800's a poor young man went to a church in Russia, desperate for God. He

[17] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. p. 308-310

> had lost the use of his arm in a tragic accident. Then he was orphaned at an early age. Then his brother stole his inheritance. Then his wife had died after just a few short years of marriage. On this day as he went to church he was homeless and alone in the world. He was depressed. In church he heard Saint Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing." He was drawn to such a life, but couldn't conceive of how even to begin. How could anyone pray continuously? He decided to go on a journey and find people who could teach him how to pray.[18]

The New testament recommends continuous prayer:

Luke 18:1. "Pray always without becoming weary."
1 Thessalonians 5:17. Pray without ceasing.
Ephesians 6:18. Pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.
1 Timothy 2:8. In every place the men should pray.

The pilgrim decided to learn how to pray without ceasing:

> His life was empty and he longed for intimacy with Jesus." He met a staretz, a spiritual man, who taught him the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me," and instructed him to pray the Jesus Prayer without ceasing. With the Philokalia and an old Bible he walked through Russia's countryside practicing the prayer. "The Jesus Prayer" lived deep inside the pilgrim. It warmed his heart sweetly. It became a habit of his heart. It transformed him "from a depressed and reclusive man to a joyful and loving pilgrim! It healed his hurts. It gave meaning to his life. It flowed through him to bless and heal many other people."[19]

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[18] Gaultiere, Bill. *The Jesus Prayer: The Anonymous Pilgrim's Story*. https://www.soulshepherding.org/the-jesus-prayer-the-anonymous-pilgrims-story/

[19] Ibid.

At first, the words do not have much meaning for those who practice it: have mercy on me? Have mercy on what? Until slowly and steadily, the soul starts unveiling mercy of what: human's limitations, brokenness, vulnerabilities, failures, disconnect with inner selves, disconnect with others, the lack of meaning in lives, lack of values, lack of virtues.

As Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat express, at one point, the pilgrim observes:

> I spent the entire summer continuously repeating the Jesus prayer. I was very much at peace and often even dreamed that I was saying the prayer. If I happened to meet people during the day, each of them without exception seemed very dear to me, as if they were family, though otherwise I did not concern myself with them much. All thoughts seemed to vanish on their own, and I thought of nothing else but the prayer. My mind was recollected and attentive to it, while at times, and of its own accord, my heart would feel a warmth and a sort of pleasure.[20]

On this devotional path, the pilgrim comes to a deep appreciation for silence and solitude.

Chapter IV continues the explanation of this "Prayer of the Heart."

Gregory of Nyssa. The negative way: we cannot see God, but we may desire to contemplate him

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – c. 395) in "The Life of Moses" provides a contemplative view of Moses' life, showing that we cannot see God or comprehend him, but we can have a desire to try to approach a hidden God, to contemplate him. According to McGinn,

[20] https://www.lychnos.org/the-way-of-a-pilgrim-2/

he proposed the first negative way in the history of spirituality. God is infinite, and we are limited: the more we search for his presence, the more noticeable we realize his absence.

Saint Ambrose. Mystical knowledge as a source of moral, natural, mystical meanings

Saint Ambrose (c. 340 – 397), according to McGinn, considered three sources of mystical knowledge from the Old Testament's Salomon: "Proverbs gives the moral meaning, which cleanses the image of the soul; Ecclesiastes provides the natural meaning, which allows us to transcend the world; and the Song of the Songs is the source of the mystical sense where we drink of the abundance of love."[21]

John Cassian. Apophatic spirituality, unceasing silent prayer and contemplation to a life of perfection in God's presence

John Cassian (c. 360 – c. 432) proposed a profound simplicity based on an unceasing silent prayer and contemplation of the scriptures, which require humility, virtues, mental silence, purity of heart, and living in a community to exercise love and friendship.

Such apophatic spirituality involves continuous prayer, inner silence, stillness, tranquility, living God's presence; the mind is purified, illumined, and made perfect.

According to Bernard McGinn,

> The early desert fathers measured Christian perfection by humility, charity, kindness, and patience. […] They believed that prayer

[21] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. p. 203

> was the essence of the life of perfection and that pure and unceasing prayer provided immediate access to God's presence as a foretaste of heaven.[22]

According to Bouyer,[23] Cassian stated:

> The summits of this mysticism are, in fact, described by him as a prayer, a constant prayer of fire, wholly inspired by the Gospel. This prayer is born of constant meditation on the scriptures and, still more precisely, it is a perfect assimilation of psalmody […] Cassian points out to us the ideal means for arriving at the prayer of fire, starting from psalmody and the meditation of the scriptures, the constant repetition of the formula: O God, come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me.[24]

Saint Augustine. Contemplation to knowing and experiencing spiritual realities

Saint Augustine (354–430) made profound contributions to Christian spirituality. As McGinn states, after realizing Plato's influence on his spirituality, Augustine writes in the "Confessions," chapter 7:

> And so, admonished to return to myself, I entered into my inmost parts with you leading me on. I was able because you had

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[22] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. p. 23.

[23] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York.

[24] Cassian, John. *First Conference, VII*. Quoted by Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. p. 507

> become my helper. I entered and saw with my soul's eye an unchanging Light above the same soul's eye, above my mind… He who knows truth knows that light, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. O Eternal Truth and True Love and Beloved Eternity! You are my God, to you I sigh day and night.[25]

McGinn explains how this passage "involves an initial withdrawal from the sense world that often begins from a consideration of the beauty of the universe […] followed by an interior movement into the depths of the soul […] finally there is a movement above the soul to the vision of God."[26]

According to Jean-Pierre Torrell,[27] Augustine defended the unity of spirituality, theology, faith, and reason:

> Science engenders, nourishes, defends, strengthens, the sovereignly salutary faith. Aiming my efforts according to that rule of faith, as much as I have been able… I have sought Thee; I desired to see in understanding what I held by faith.[28]

Saint Augustine promoted education for all so anyone could interpret the scriptures, "the true source of all real learning for the Christian."[29]

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[25] Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Edward B. Pusey. http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354-0430,_Augustinus,_Confessionum_Libri_Tredecim-Pusey_Transaltion,_EN.pdf. p. 235.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas*. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

[28] Augustine. *De Trinitate XIV, 6, 3*. Quoted by Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P. Saint Thomas Aquinas. Volume 2. Spiritual Master. Translated by Robert Royal. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. 2003. p. 4

[29] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. II p 24

As McGinn explains,[30] Saint Augustine had some experiences of knowing by illumination. Augustine worked for thirty years in the first episode of his book "On the Trinity." While he was walking by the seaside one day, reflecting on the complex problem of how God could be three persons, he saw a little child who, with a seashell, was carrying water from the sea into the small hole in the sand. Augustine asked the child what he was doing, and the child responded that he was trying to bring the ocean into the little hole in the sand. Augustine answered that it was impossible, the hole cannot contain the entire ocean, to what the child responded: "Indeed, but I will sooner draw all the water from the sea and empty it into this hole than you will succeed in penetrating the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your limited understanding." When Augustine reacted, the child had disappeared.[31]

McGinn[32] describes a second spiritual experience in Ostia, with his mother Monica, in which love and knowledge are intertwined in Augustine's mystical consciousness:

> Raising ourselves up by a more burning affection to God […] we touched wisdom slightly with the whole beat of the heart […] that we may hear him whom we love in these creatures, though without their interference.[33]

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[30] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. p. 234

[31] Augustine, The Confessions of Saint Augustine. Translator: Edward Bouverie Pusey. Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm

[32] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. p. 235

[33] Augustine, The Confessions of Saint Augustine. Translator: Edward Bouverie Pusey. Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. Neoplatonism: apophatic spirituality, a silent journey to know and union with God

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (5th – 6th century) continues the Neoplatonic views applied to Christianity. In "The Divine Names,"[34] the symbols and intellectual knowledge lead toward God. However, such knowledge is imperfect in understanding an infinite God. The names we use provide an inadequate description of God. Therefore, the shorter the words we use, the better: apophatic spirituality, a silent spiritual journey, a contemplative spirituality are the way.

> As far as is possible, raise thyself up in unknowing even unto union with Him Who is beyond all essence and all knowledge, for it is indeed by going out of thyself and out of all things with an irresistible leap, free and pure, that thou shalt raise thyself up to the pure and superessential ray of the divine darkness, after having abandoned all things and having liberated thyself from them all... Then, delivered from all objects and from the very organs of contemplation (the contemplative) penetrates into the truly mystical Cloud of Unknowing in which he closes his eyes to all objects of knowledge and finds himself in utter intangibility and invisibility, since he now belongs entirely to Him Who is beyond all, and belongs no longer to any thing, neither to himself, nor to any other being, and is thus united in the most noble union with Him Who is utterly unknowable, by the cessation of all knowledge; in this total unknowing he now knows with a knowledge that is beyond understanding.[35]

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[34] Dionysius the Areopagite. *On the Divine Names*. Translated by John Parker. Published by Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. 2005.

[35] Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. *Mystical Theology*.

As Basil Pennington explains:

> In Mystical Theology he motivates his readers to seek union with God in contemplation, rather than in rational understanding and that requires not only that we purify ourselves morally but also that we leave behind rational thought and sense experience: we get to know God not by apprehending him with our understanding; the reasoning powers must enter into a passive stillness, allowing to possess God with a knowledge that exceeds understanding.[36]

José López Sánchez stated:

> In one of his most relevant works, The Names of God, he manifests to us the absolutely transcendent character of God: "In the same way, and in all truth, that infinite supra-essence transcends all essence; that Unity is beyond all intelligence. No reasoning can reach that inscrutable One. There are no words with which to express that ineffable Good, the One, source of all unity, supra-essential being, mind over mind, word over word. It transcends all reason, all intuition, all name. Many are the names that Pseudo Dionysius attributes to God, among them: Good, Light, Beauty, Love, Life, Wisdom, Intelligence, Truth, Power, Eternity, Peace, Saint of Saints, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, etc."
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> Mystical theology will be the work of Pseudo Dionysius that produced the greatest impact on later mysticism. As we said above, darkness is a key part of his doctrine: "When he (Moses) frees the spirit, and divests it of all that he sees and is seen, he (Moses) penetrates the mysterious darkness of non-knowledge." On entering this darkness, word and thought are paralyzed:

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[36] Magill, Frank N.; McGreal, Ian P, editors. *Christian Spirituality*. Harper Collins Publishers. 1988. p. 58

> "Now therefore, as we enter that Darkness which the understanding cannot comprehend, we come to fall short not only of words. Moreover, in perfect silence and without thinking of anything." Likewise, one of the most revealing texts of Pseudo Dionysius, and one that we cannot ignore, is the following: "On an ascending scale we now add. This Cause is neither soul nor intelligence; it has no imagination, no expression, no reason, no understanding. It is neither word by itself nor understanding. We can neither speak of it nor understand it. It is neither number nor order, neither magnitude nor smallness, neither equality nor similarity nor dissimilarity. It is neither mobile nor immobile, nor does it reSaint It has no power, nor is it power. It is not light, nor does it live, nor is it life. It is neither substance nor eternity nor time. It cannot be understood by the understanding, for it is neither knowledge nor truth. It is not kingdom, nor wisdom, nor one, nor unity. It is not divinity, nor goodness, nor spirit in the sense that we understand it. It is not sonship or fatherhood or anything that anyone or we know. It is neither of the things that are nor of the things that are not. No one knows it as it is nor does the cause know anyone as it is. It has no reason, no name, no knowledge. It is neither darkness nor light, neither error nor truth. Absolutely nothing can be affirmed or denied about it."[37]

As Bouyer[38] explains, Dionysius continued the Neoplatonic view of the superior being concerned for the inferior beings, trying to elevate the inferior beings toward the superior, starting with communication through the word designating an interior experience. Contemplating higher realities, superluminous, intangible, invisible, that

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[37] López Sánchez, José. En torno a la experiencia mística. *Revista Española de Teología* 60 (2000) 85-97.

[38] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 401-419

blind our senses, raises our unknowing into the cloud, like Moses. God is inaccessible light that leads us to name him in a cataphatic exercise, through names, retaining from such names what is possible to describe God. It also leads us in an apophatic exercise, as we are conscious of the imperfection and limitation of our knowledge of God. Such knowledge leads to a transformation process, to assimilate us to God, to become like him.

Bouyer explains how "Mystical Theology" expresses the apophatic way as the road to ascend to God through purgation, illumination, and union. The negative way is a central part of spirituality based on the impossibility of knowing God directly: "God transcends all affirmation by being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and all negation by the plenitude of his simple and absolute nature."[39]

As Bouyer[40] explains, in "The Divine Names," Dionysius presents a Neoplatonic conception of God's names as Good, Beautiful, Being, Life, and Wisdom. The unknowable God reveals himself in creation: we can know something of him through cataphatic spirituality, but we need apophatic spirituality to continue the journey toward him. We need the cataphatic way to start the journey and the apophatic toward an invisible, infinite God; we need the knowing, and the unknowing, as Moses knew God in the cloud, the darkness, in the absence.

Saint Gregory. Experiencing a contemplative life for everyone, to encounter, know and love God

Saint Gregory the Great (540–604) converted to Christianity during his 30's.

[39] Ibid. p. 416
[40] Ibid.

According to McGinn,[41] Gregory believed in a mutual enrichment between action and contemplation. Gregory understood contemplation as attentive regard, respectful listening, oriented to the love of God, open to all, and active or contemplative.

As McGinn explains, for Gregory, the scriptures require a spiritual interpretation. Every Christian should rely on the scriptures, especially simple believers. Contemplation is required to understand the scriptures because the good works measure their connection with God, and their spirituality:

> The active life, fruitful in works of love of neighbor, as standing in a reciprocal relationship with contemplation, so that active virtue was to help foster more intense contemplation.[42]

McGinn explains how for Gregory:

> Love itself is a form of knowledge […] We need to know God before we can love him […] anyone eager for the work of contemplation has to first question himself in a careful way about how much he loves; love's power is the mind's machine, drawing it away from the world while it lifts it on high. [43]

McGinn explains how Gregory resorts to poetic images to express spiritual realities: contemplation is sleep (I sleep, but my heart wakes), is like the death of the body, is the peacefulness of life when all carnal desires have been trodden underfoot; contemplation is a tomb, the sepulcher of the mind; contemplation is a ladder to the height, or a mountain; the scripture is a door (entry into the invisible truths), a dense forest (the believer finds shelter), the sea (multiple

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[41] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York.

[42] Ibid. p. 56

[43] Ibid. p. 56

meanings), a river shallow and deep (lambs can walk and elephants swim), a mountain to be climbed (thick with meanings and covered with allegories), flint (solid rock that can fire spiritual understanding), food and drink (harder to chew or easy to drink), a mirror (the internal mind can judge its relationship with God).

McGinn explains how Gregory relied on the "experience of contemplation," relying on Jacob's examples, Moses, and Elijah's encounters with God. Gregory believed in the value of experience. He had a hard life in which spirituality had the power of a longing desire, transforming suffering into stages of growth, a unique way to reach the goal of love, the triumph of joy, and peace.

McGinn explains how spiritual experiences make up the fabric of our spiritual struggles and lives. They unveil the polarities that we experience: the absence of God leads to our desire for his presence, the sound of the word versus the silence of contemplation, hearing to the external and internal voices, joy of the presence versus fear of our limitations, elevation versus temptation.

McGinn explains how to enjoy contemplation Gregory considered crucial the role of the Holy Spirit as an internal teacher. He used several words interchangeably: contemplation, love, desire, seeking, knowledge, and vision.

Bouyer[44] explains how for Gregory, contemplative life is open to everyone, even the laity: a soul that leads an active life well develops a desire to obtain the grace of contemplation, reach a mystical understanding, and penetrate the interior mysteries.

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[44] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York.

Saint Bernard. Knowing by the spiritual senses, spiritual experiences

McGinn explains how ancient Christians believed in two books by which God instructed us in his being and his saving love: the book of creation and the book of scripture. "The capacities to know and to love were the essential notes of human nature."[45]

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), according to McGinn[46], added a third book: the book of experience, the constant presence of the book of experience, relying on a gradual awakening of our spiritual senses: the sight (contemplative vision, illumination), hearing (listening to the good spirits, to the Gospel), touching (by spiritual desire, wish, faith), taste (sweetness), these spiritual senses help us to know and feel God's love, to enjoy his presence, lead us in our spiritual journey.[47]

As McGinn explains, Bernard emphasized the role of experience as completely necessary in the spiritual journey, above theoretical teachings: "Today we read in the book of experience" must be part of the daily spiritual journey. "Only contemplatives are able in this life to enjoy free good pleasure in some way, and only in part."[48] Bernard's spirituality was a spirituality of love: divine love, human love, bridal love, sweet love, intense love, love, and union.

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[45] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. p. 200

[46] Ibid.

[47] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. pp. 187-188

[48] Ibid. p. 169

Saint Francis. Knowing by perceptions, symbols, and spiritual presence

As Etienne Gilson states, Francis witnessed symbols as the phenomena that led to knowing God: "the endlessly springing fountain of symbols or rather the permanent transfiguration of the universe in which he saw precious images of God."[49] Through contemplation, Francis discovered the first source from which all symbols flow.

Gilson explains how, for Francis, the creation expresses the goodness of God; the creatures are symbols of God's attributes:

> In each one of the works of the Lord he recognized the hand of the workman and his soul was filled with joy: everything that seemed to him good shouted in his ears the goodness of God; he used all things as steps to mount to Him. From this comes that unique love he bore to things, speaking to them, exhorting them to bless God, treating them with the respect and the tenderness merited by their high dignity as images of their Creator.[50]
>
> Above all creatures he loved lambs because they were immediate symbols of Jesus Christ, but he loved likewise the sun for its beauty and fire for its purity. When he washed his hands he was careful not to let any drop of water fall in a place where it would be in danger of being trampled underfoot, for water is the figure of Holy Penitence and it is by the water of Baptism that the soul is cleansed from original sin. He could not walk upon stones without reverence and awe, for love of Him Who is the keystone of the comer. He would not let them cut all the wood

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[49] Gilson, Etienne. *The philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*. Translated from the French by Dom Illtyd Trethowan Monk of Downside Abbey and Frank]. Sheed. Published by Saint Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N. J. Distributed by Desclee Co. 1965. Paris, Tournai, New York, Rome. p. 54.

[50] Ibid. p. 65.

> from a tree to light the fire, for love of Him Who wrought our salvation on the wood of the Cross.[51]
>
> Saint Francis lived continuously in the midst of a forest of symbols and the substantial reality of this symbolism was so living that by it he regulated all his actions. From this comes that interior and exterior joy that he drew unfailingly from all things; in touching them or in contemplating them it was as though his spirit was "no longer upon earth but in Heaven." Francis spirituality impregnated Bonaventure's "Illumination."[52]

Francis expresses the value of symbols and hermeneutics as ways to know spiritual realities. As Waaijman explains, spirituality involves hermeneutics:

> Originally the primary focus of hermeneutics was the interpretation of religious texts. After the Enlightenment hermeneutics fanned out over virtually all areas of study: history, the socio-economic sciences, practical philosophy, art, the theory of science, law, the natural sciences, indeed 'all that is insofar as it can be understood'. Now the object of hermeneutics no longer only encompasses the written language but also human action, art, history, indeed even the language of nature and things in general.[53]

The "Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon" reflects these intuitions.[54] The first paragraphs give thanks to God:

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[51] Ibid. p. 65.

[52] Ibid. p. 65.

[53] Waaijman, Kees. A hermeneutic of spirituality. A Preliminary Study. *Studies in Spirituality*. Peeters. 1995. Leuven. Belgium. p. 1

[54] Francis of Assisi. Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon. https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=183

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made,
And first my lord Brother Sun,
Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him.
How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
In the heavens you have made them, bright
And precious and fair.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,
By which you cherish all that you have made.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you brighten up the night.
How beautiful is he, how merry! Full of power and strength.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our Mother,
Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
Various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.[55]

Francis expresses his thankfulness for belonging to a beautiful world, being part of the family of creatures:

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made,
And first my lord Brother Sun,
Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him.
How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
In the heavens you have made them, bright
And precious and fair.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,

[55] Francis of Assisi. The Canticle of Brother Sun. https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/st-francis-and-his-canticle

By which you cherish all that you have made.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you brighten up the night.
How beautiful is he, how merry! Full of power and strength.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our Mother,
Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
Various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.[56]

Bonaventure. Knowing by contemplation, illumination, love

According to McGinn,[57] Thomas of Saint Victor influenced Bonaventure's mysticism. Thomas believed there are two forms of knowledge of God: one based on the intellect and the other based on the heart, affective love experience; the latter is incomparably better than the former.

Following Dionysius' view that:

> We must break free of the perceptions of the body and the mind in order to plunge into the truly mystical cloud of unknowing, united to the Unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge: because God is unknowable but reveals himself as Love, love has special access to him, the power of loving is inestimably more profoundly and more sublimely drawn by God than is the power of understanding, because angels and humans love more than they can investigate or understand.[58]

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[56] Francis of Assisi. The Canticle of Creation is St. Francis of Assisi's testament of God's manifestation in all. https://www.gbfranciscans.org/news/all-praise-be-yours-my-lord

[57] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. p. 79

[58] Ibid. pp. 80-81

Etienne Gilson[59] provided a definitive explanation of Bonaventure's views of God's self-revelation.

Gilson explains how Saint Francis taught Bonaventure how contemplation was the channel that enabled God's self-revelation, "to live in a sort of permanent contact with the presence of God, a kind of habit in him."

This "illumination" provides knowledge, enlightens the path toward peace, and provides God's light to obtain peace, "the highest good that Our Lord promised before leaving this earth."

> Gilson states how Saint Luke (1:79, "the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace") speaks of Divine illumination as destined to direct our steps upon the way that leads to peace. The Epistle to the Philippians makes it clear that this peace of mind and heart cannot be attained by the ordinary ways of knowledge. The peace promised by Jesus and left by Him to men (John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you") is then a peace surpassing all merely human thought: The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.[60]
>
> Contemplation is at the very center of the Franciscan ideal, as the ultimate term of knowledge; action is the necessary preparation for contemplation and the repose of the contemplative life must be the reward of the labors of the active life. Not only long-continued exercise of love of neighbor and penance, but

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[59] Gilson, Etienne. *The philosophy of Saint Bonaventure.* Translated from the French by Dom Illtyd Trethowan Monk of Downside Abbey and Frank]. Sheed. Published by Saint Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N. J. Distributed by Desclee Co. 1965. Paris, Tournai, New York, Rome.

[60] Ibid. p. 66.

> also-and especially-the constant practice of meditation and prayer become the normal conditions of all true knowledge.[61]
>
> To attain understanding or wisdom, one must first thirst for it. The gift of understanding. For example, is a solid food like bread, which Saint Francis said that we must labor hard to acquire. Men sow the grain, it grows, they harvest it, take it to the mills, bake it and do a score of other things beside; so it is with the gift of understanding, which is acquired only at the cost of multiple labors and by one who has ardently desired it. It is that the continuous prayer of Saint Francis came to be the very foundation of the whole structure of human knowledge.[62]
>
> Naturally man desires knowledge, happiness and peace; knowledge, since we see his thought curiously investigating the sources of things; happiness, since each man and indeed each animal acts with a view to procuring a good or avoiding an evil; peace since the pursuit of knowledge or that of happiness are not followed simply for the sake of the pursuit but in order that the desire in which it is born may be appeased by the calm and the repose that follow from the attainment by a movement of its end. This love of peace, then, is as the perfection and the completion of the other two.[63]

McGinn explains how knowledge is produced by apophatic spirituality and by symbols:

> The apophatic view of Dionysius becomes transmuted in Bonaventure language of love, expressed better through metaphors of

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[61] Ibid. p. 68.
[62] Ibid. p. 69.
[63] Ibid. p. 79.

> tasting and touching than of seeing; the culminating point is reached in love, with all intellectual operations left behind.[64]

Saint Albert the Great. Contemplative wisdom, both cataphatic and apophatic, the intellectual, affective, and faith character of mysticism

Albert the great integrated the cataphatic and apophatic views. McGinn explains how Albert stressed the intellectual, affective, and faith character of mysticism. The intellectual has preeminence:

> Nothing is loved unless it is known: knowing and loving are the roads to union. Contemplative wisdom is a loving intelligence, both apophatic and cataphatic spiritualities are necessary, apophatic prevails: our understanding fails when it refers to God. We can know God in two ways: symbolically, through the comparison of bodily properties to God; and mystically, through the transcendental predicates, such as "good" and "true" that are truly God's, but are only known to us through their limited manifestations in the creatures.[65]

Saint Thomas Aquinas. Contemplation as a road toward truth and happiness

According to McGinn, Thomas Aquinas continues with the apophatic views:

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64 McGinn, Bernard. *The Flowering of Mysticism. Men and women in the new mysticism. 1200 - 1350*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1998. New York. p. 111

65 McGinn, Bernard. *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*. The Crossroad publishing company. 2005. New York. pp. 21-24

> God is above everything we can know and therefore naming God through negation is especially appropriate […] When we say that God is good or wise, we do not only signify that he is the cause of wisdom and goodness, but that these things exist in him in a higher way […] At the end of our knowing we know God as an unknown.[66]

For Thomas, contemplation belongs to the simple consideration of the truth. Consequently, the intellect is involved, and the will as directing the intellect toward the desired good, delighting in the apprehended good:

> Because a person delights in gaining what is loved, the contemplative life finds its goal in the delight that is in the faculty of desire [...] As long as someone delights in seeing the thing that is loved, that delight itself arouse love more greatly.[67]

According to Torrell,[68] Saint Thomas is usually considered more a theologian than a contemplative. Thomas is generally recognized by the speculative dimension, the reason's effort to comprehend what is held by faith. However, this is incorrect: Thomas was a Dominican brother, a mendicant order who battled to reform the feudal, episcopal, and educational structures. Thomas based his theology on the "experience of God" toward infused contemplation, the core of mysticism.

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[66] Ibid. p. 29

[67] Ibid. p. 32

[68] Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas.* The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

As Torrell[69] explains, for Thomas, the ultimate end of his "sacra doctrina" is the contemplation of the first truth. This involves affective dimensions of theology, reflected in the role of charity, and living faith. The contemplation of God begins and ends in the act of love: "Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God" (Mt 5:8), involves "blessed" which means happy, blissed, "are the pure in heart" which involves practice, "they shall see God" which involves contemplation of God, the truth.

According to Torrell, Thomas speaks of two types of wisdom: one, theological wisdom, acquired contemplation, which is obtained through study, the experience of the divine, and faith; the other, mystic wisdom, infused contemplation, the effect of the gift of wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which is obtained by God's generosity.

Unfortunately, after Thomas's death, the unity of his sacra doctrina broke down, the intellectual orientation divorced from the mystical orientation, and that dissociation continued forever.

As Torrell explains, Thomas presents the benefits of listening to the word of God:

> For Thomas, the attentive listening to the Word of God is a privileged way of acquiring the love of God, because the story of the favors God has done us is eminently suited to awaken in us that love. The example of the disciples at Emmaus is there to confirm it for us: their hearts were entirely burning with love when Jesus explained the Scripture to them along the way. [70]
>
> The word of God is useful for illuminating the intelligence, "the teaching is a light" (Proverbs 6:23); making glad the senses: "How sweet on my palate is your promise" (Psalm 119:103); inflaming the heart: "It was in my heart like a devouring flame"

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[69] Ibid. p. 7.

[70] Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Saint Thomas Aquinas: Volume 1. The Person and His Work. translated by Robert Royal. The Catholic University of America Press. 1996. p. 32

> (Jeremiah 20:9); "The word of the Lord inflamed them" (Psalm 106:19); rectifying our labors: "Direct me in your truth, teach me" (Psalm 25:5); obtaining glory: "Observe counsel and prudence" (Proverbs 3:21); instructing others: "All scripture inspired by God is useful for teaching, reproof . . ." (2 Timothy 3:16). [71]

Meister Eckhart. Apophatic spirituality, knowing by spiritual illumination, lead to union with God

Meister Eckhart (13th – 14th century) relied on spiritual illumination as part of apophatic spirituality:

> The highest attainment in this life is to remain still and let God act and speak in us. [...] There is more in this unknowing knowledge than in any ordinary understanding, for this unknowing lures you away from all understood things and from yourself. This is what Christ meant when he said: 'Whoever does not deny himself and leave father and mother and is not estranged from all these, is not worthy of me.' That is as though to say: whoever does not abandon creaturely externals can neither be conceived or born in this divine birth. […] The height of gnosis is to know in agnosia.[72]

José López Sánchez presents how Eckhart's apophatic spirituality leads to the union with God:

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[71] Ibid. p. 31

[72] Meister Eckhart. *The complete Mystical works of Meister Eckhart*. Translated and Edited by Maurice O'C. Walshe. Revised with a Foreword by Bernard McGinn. Herder 8 Herder Book. Tbe Crossroad Publisbing Company. New York. 2009.

> As in Pseudo-Dionysius, in Eckhart we have one of the fundamental pillars on which all Christian mysticism has been forged and built. Perhaps the most important idea we find in Eckhart is that of union with God. In this regard C. E. Saltzman will tell us: "On the very experience of union with God, as he himself experienced it, Meister Eckhart, in the culminating paragraphs of his writings we can discover a great closeness to experiences such as those of 'some masters of Zen or Sufism, to that of the Upanishads and to all the great mystical traditions.' For Eckhart, the soul is intimately united to God in the mystical experience: 'Yes, in the body of Our Lord the soul is so intimately united to God that all the angels, cherubim or seraphim cannot recognize or find any difference between the two, because where they touch God, they touch the soul, and where they touch the soul, they touch God. There has never been a more intimate union. For the soul is united to God much more intimately than the soul and the body that constitute man. That union is far more intimate than that of a drop of water in a glass full of wine, for in this there would be water and wine, but the soul and God are so transformed into one that no creature could ever find the difference.'"[73]

The Cloud of Unknowing. Active and contemplative know God by a silent presence

An anonymous monk in England wrote the Cloud of Unknowing by the end of the 14th century.

> "This is what you are to do: lift your heart up to God, with a gentle stirring of love desiring God for God's own sake and not for any gifts." This is the form of contemplative prayer, which

[73] López Sánchez, José. En torno a la experiencia mística. *Revista Española de Teología* 60 (2000) 85-97.

can be practiced in less than a second, during a person's daily work, while walking, in solitude or with others.

Center all your attention and desire on God and let this be the sole concern of your mind and heart. Do all in your power to forget everything else. And so diligently persevere in it until you feel joy in it. For in the beginning it is usual to feel nothing but a kind of darkness about your mind, as it were, a cloud of unknowing. You will seem to know nothing and to feel nothing except a naked intent toward God in the depths of your being. Try as you might, this darkness and cloud will remain between you and your God. You will feel frustrated, for your mind will be unable to grasp God, and your heart will not relish the delight of God's love. But learn to be at home in this darkness. Return to it as often as you can, letting your spirit cry out to God whom you love. For if, in this life, you hope to feel and see God as God is, it must be within this darkness and this cloud. But if you strive to fix your love on God forgetting all else, which is the work of contemplation I have urged you to begin, I am confident that God in goodness will bring you to a deep experience of God-self.[74]

If you want to gather all your desire into one simple word that the mind can easily retain, choose a short word rather than a long one. A one-syllable word such as "God" or "love" is best. But choose one that is meaningful to you. Then fix it in your mind so that it will remain in there come what may. This word will be your defense in conflict and in peace.[75]

As I have already explained to you, this simple work is not a rival to your daily activities. For with your attention centered on the blind awareness of your naked being united to God's you will

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[74] *The cloud of unknowing.* Edited by M. S. Harl. The British Museum. Second edition. 1922. https://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/cloudunknowing.pdf.

[75] Ibid.

> go about your daily rounds, eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, going and coming, speaking and listening, lying down and rising up, standing and kneeling, running and riding, working and resting. In the midst of it all, you will be offering to God continually each day the most precious gift you can make. This work will be at the heart of everything you do, whether active or contemplative.[76]

Harald Walach[77] explains how Hugh of Balma (13th century), a Carthusian monk, had a substantial impact on "The Cloud of Unknowing," on "the whole lay movement of the modern devotion which was so influential as the forerunner of reformist ideas, […] on Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross and Ignatius of Loyola."[78]

As Walach states, Hugh of Balma expressed the high intellectual spirituality of his time reflected in Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. In his view, any person, no matter his education or status, layperson and priests, theologians, and monks, can obtain knowledge of God, not rationally but experientially, through purification, illumination, and union with God, based on the affections.

This follows Pseudo-Dionysius' Mystical Theology:

> "A person should abandon all thinking, all mental and cognitive activity and rise in the darkness of the mind to the ultra-radiance of the One beyond all concepts and words," in opposition to Platonic and Aristotelian pre-eminence of the intellect as the highest human faculty. [79]

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Walach, Harald. "A Medieval Carthusian monk's recipe to Multiple Kensho." Hugh of Balma's Approach to Mystical Union and Some Striking Similarities to Modern Zen Teaching. *Studies in Spirituality*. 2009. Belgium.

[78] Ibid. p. 201.

[79] Ibid. pp. 199-200.

Walach explains how Hugh of Balma presented a view of spirituality that has remarkable similarities to Zen Buddhism. Walach describes Zen as:

> Immediate experience of the true reality of the world as well as the human mind […] At its core is the realization of connectivity and interdependence of all beings and the insight that there cannot be person salvation without, or even at the cost of, the salvation of other beings. […] The method to attain realization of one's nature traditionally is Zazen, sitting in silent meditation, abstaining from wilful cognitive activity, mindfully observing the breath until the mind becomes clear as a still lake. Sitting in still meditation without actively engaging in rational, cognitive activity or imaginative work has been a common denominator of different traditions in Buddhism, particularly of Zen.[80]

Walach clarifies the differences with Christian spirituality:

> While the Zen tradition places much emphasis on the right method of meditation and the experience of Kensho, as well as on the deepening of this experience in daily life, the Christian mystical tradition has not been very methodological. It placed more emphasis on 'grace', the notion that the final experience is not attainable by one's own effort alone, but is freely given by God, who offered himself in the mystical experience of union to the soul.[81]

[80] Ibid. pp. 199-200.
[81] Ibid. p. 200

Ignatius of Loyola. The role of imagination in spiritual experiences leads to the union with God

Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* explains the role of imagination in contemplation. Ivan Platovnjak[82] explains how:

> Through the exercises, Ignatius of Loyola wanted to enable others to discover the presence of God in their lives. Above all, he desired for every person to experience, as personally as possible, how it is to be truly and freely loved.[83]

Platovnjak explains Ignatius' views that imagination is required to enrich the spiritual experience:

> In the introductory exercises and contemplation points, he invites the praying person: I will see with the sight of the imagination the road; I will see the persons; I will look, mark and contemplate what they are saving; I will look and consider what they are doing. In this form of prayer, the praying person enters into the mystery event with the imagination (presentation and settling in) in such a way that he truly becomes a part of the act.
>
> Ignatius particularly emphasizes that "it is not knowing much, but realizing and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul." Thus, after the fourth contemplation of the same Gospel mystery, he invites the praying person to perform a fifth by applying all five senses so that the mystery he contemplates would touch him/her interiorly even stronger, enter this body even more deeply, and would »incarnate« within him/her.

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[82] Platovnjak, Ivan. The importance of imagination in Ignatian spirituality. *Bogoslovska smotra*, 88 (2018.) 4,1035-1055.

[83] Ibid. p. 1041.

> Praying with imagination is a lived and experienced event surpassing the use of pure reason, because it remains in the memory as a real event in which a true transformative meeting took place. The praying person can live from a memory of some of Jesus' gestures, looks, words, tone of voice, or a lived scene of Jesus' encounter with different people or himself/herself tor a long time. Such contemplation refreshes the internal senses and attitudes of the praying person and deepens his/her love for the Father and Jesus in the Holy Spirit.[84]

Dae-Seop Yi[85] explains the role of imagination in the conversion process, according to Ignatius:

> Imagination plays an essential role in the conversion process since conversion begins in the imagination. How, then, does one experience conversion in the imagination? Since the imagination is a participatory way of entering into creation and events, one can know the deepest realities through it. When one prays with the imagination, one can enter into God's word as a participant, not just remaining outside as an indifferent bystander. Therefore, "entering into the details and the emotions of the narrative in this way allows God's word to take surprising turns and speak to us in new ways. The imagination is a powerful way of disposing one for an encounter with the living Christ, who often speaks directly to a present situation. At that moment, the retreatant can get new insight and interior knowledge. An individual's emotions as well as deeds originate from that place, so a conversion experience demands more than reception of new information. The imagination is needed to participate in the truth which is able to transform us. Imagination enables one to cross over to make a

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[84] Ibid. p. 1042.

[85] Dae-Seop Yi. *Conversion Experience Through Contemplation in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises*. http://dx.doi.org/10.18708/kjcs.2016.07.101.1.175

> connection with the ultimate infinite reality and to open oneself to the depth at the heart of matter. Thus, imagination is the source of the conversion experience."[86]

Godfrey O'Donnell[87] shows how imagination produces empathy, which reinforces a relationship and leads to union:

> An examination of Ignatian contemplation leads us to the same conclusion. In contemplation the imagination creates fantasies — a symbol, a scene, a story — to help us to enter someone else's world. As far as possible we share in the other person's experience; we attempt to see things as he does, to feel as he does. We become assimilated into the other person's life and so establish an empathetic relationship. From the point of view of human talents empathetic and contemplative faculties are identical. The task of both is union, and for them to be effective they must recruit a whole range of human qualities and feelings.[88]

Saint John of the Cross. Knowledge to inflame love produced by cataphatic, apophatic, and symbolic spirituality

Marie-Joseph Huguenin[89] explains how Saint John of the Cross relies on several sources of knowledge:

> For John of the Cross, the human being is constitutively created to know and love. Usually, the one does not go without the other. His theory of knowledge is very rich because it integrates all the

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[86] Ibid. p. 190.

[87] O'Donnell, Godfrey. Contemplation. Prayer in the Spiritual Exercises. *American Theological Library Association*.

[88] Ibid. p. 32.

[89] Huguenin, Marie-Joseph. Le thème de la connaissance chez Jean de la Croix. *Teresianum* 54 (2003/1) 79-116.

dimensions of the human person, his senses, his faculties, his openness to grace. Sensitive knowledge has its full value if it allows one to rise to God. Supernatural knowledge also has meaning only for union with God. He thus situates the importance and greatness of contemplation which perceives, through the spiritual senses, the essence of God himself.[90]

God communicates to the soul, in a single act, light and love all together. Sometimes knowledge feels more than love, sometimes, on the contrary, love is better recognized than intelligence; sometimes all this communication consists of intelligence without any love, and other times it consists entirely of love without intelligence.[91]

Sometimes this mystical and loving theology, while inflaming the will, wounds the other power of understanding, glorifying it with some divine knowledge and fire.[92]

The silent and invisible spirituality

The Spiritual Canticle of Saint John of the Cross reflects spiritual experiences that many people live in their daily realities: the universal intuition of the absence of God from our lives, how can we know spiritual realities, if they are invisible, they cannot be perceived by our senses; how can we know God, who is invisible?

Through meditation and contemplation, a person has a dialogue with reality, in which the soul asks about God, and the creatures respond, expressing details about God's beauty, goodness, and love.

However, the knowledge obtained from the creatures, from these messengers, is not enough, and the soul continues seeking to dialogue directly with God.

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[90] Ibid. p. 105.
[91] Ibid. p. 80.
[92] Ibid. p. 106.

Luis M. Girón-Negrón[93] explains the influence of Dionysius on Saint John of the Cross:

> In Subida, a pivotal exposition on how the intellect cannot come in the way of the soul's loving union with God, John explicitly identifies the highest echelon of contemplation, the unitive apprehension of God's secret wisdom, as both "mystical theology" and the Dionysian "ray of darkness."[94]
>
> In the Canticle John dovetails the conjunction of theory and practice in the affective Dionysian concept of mystical theology, that is, the conjunction of Dionysian apophasis with the amatory language of Solomon's canticle at the threshold of mystical unitio.[95]
>
> John equates Dionysius' via negativa with the foundational meaning of the noche oscura as the intellectual "darkening" of the unpurged soul in contemplation, the soul passively enabled to attain a higher way of knowing God that transcends the human mind and hence metaphorically blinds it with an overpowering radiance.[96]

Spiritual knowledge

Michael McGlynn[97] explains that part of the knowledge created cannot be expressed in words and that verbalization impairs insights and affective judgments.

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[93] Girón-Negrón, Luis M. Dionysian thought in sixteenth-century Spanish mystical theology. Modem Theology 24:4 October 2008

[94] Ibid. p. 700

[95] Ibid. p. 701

[96] Ibid. p. 701

[97] McGlynn, Michael. "Silence and ineffability as cognition in San Juan de la Cruz' coplas del mismo hechas sobre un éxtasis de alta contemplación." *Studies in Spirituality*. 2011. Belgium. p. 214.

> In Subida del Monte Carmelo, Juan describes cognition beyond the senses and beyond words, which he calls "cuatro aprehensiones del entendimiento," which are delivered to the soul not by the senses or faculties of soul but by supernatural means. Juan writes of hearing things not heard, communicated without any mediation, illuminating understanding the way a lightning bolt illumines the night sky, suddenly, but leaving no trace. These are incorporeal visions. Reality is subject to cognition, and said cognition guides one's active life. Theologians, cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists agree, there is an unspeakable knowing at the edges of our awareness which informs us and to which we can draw closer for practical benefit.[98]

The four apprehensions refer to: visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual feelings.

Martin Luther. Knowledge is based on scriptures, faith, and popular piety

According to D. H. Tripp:

> Martin Luther (1483-1546) came to the thoroughgoing rejection of Dionysian mysticism; it was too confident of meeting God in the apex of the soul. God is a hidden God, and yet self-revealing through his Word. The agonizing personal quest for knowledge of God was resolved in faith only after a costly surrender of confidence of the possibility of a direct knowledge of God's inner nature.[99]

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[98] Ibid. p. 215.

[99] Tripp, D. H. Luther. Jones, Cheslyn; Wainwright, Geoffrey; Yarnold, S.J., Edward. *The study of spirituality*. Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford. 1986. p. 342.

According to McGinn,[100] Martin Luther had a rejection of Scholasticism which brought him closer to Biblical mysticism and medieval mystics such as Saint Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Gregory the Great, and Bonaventure. However, he was critical of apophatic spirituality, especially of Dionysius, for considering them more Platonic than Christian. He also rejected monasticism as being against his doctrine of justification by faith.

As Charles J. Healey[101] explains, Luther defended the need to be in direct contact with the Word of God in a personal relationship. He promoted popular piety, which required liturgical changes, emphasizing preaching, frequent communion, singing hymns, and sacred songs.

Luther also believed in the need to educate Christians, so he wrote a Large Catechism for the clergy and a Small Catechism for the ordinary believer, emphasizing a "personal relationship with God and a loving response to the God that created and redeemed us."[102]

A final contribution to lay spirituality was his doctrine of the faithful's priesthood, sanctifying life in the world with all daily activities.

John Calvin. Knowledge is based on scriptures, faith, a personal relationship with God, and the church

John Calvin's "Institutes" is considered a "Summa of piety."

D. H. Tripp presents Calvin's spirituality based on scriptures, faith, and prayer:

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[100] McGinn, Bernard. *Mysticism in the Reformation. 1500-1650*. The Crossroad publishing company. 2016. New York.

[101] Healey S.J., Charles J. *Christian spirituality. An introduction to the heritage.* St. Paul. 1999. New York. pp. 232-233.

[102] Ibid. pp. 233.

> Calvin believed in the possibility of knowing God, living a life of faith and prayer, going on to the complete joy of the resurrection. The human mind can conceive of God with truth long before he is trusted by the soul. The essential fault of fallen humanity is ignorance of God, willful self-misinformation. God has given us the Scriptures; his strategy is to lead us to himself; meditation is one of his means for achieving that end. This mature relationship with God can be sustained only by faith, which has it center in prayer.[103]

As Charles J. Healey[104] explains, for Calvin, spirituality is based on a personal relationship with Christ, born in baptism, and grows through life. Justification and sanctification are gifts from personal union with Christ. He stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in a personal contemplation linked to faith.

The role of the church is vital:

> The Church is the mother of all faithful; it is in the Church, Christ body, that union with him is nourished and sustained in that growth in the Christian life takes place, through grace, preaching and praying[105].

Spirituality must be accompanied by a daily ethical life, a service for the neighbor, and activity in the world.

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[103] Tripp, D. H. Calvin. Jones, Cheslyn; Wainwright, Geoffrey; Yarnold, S.J., Edward. *The study of spirituality*. Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford. 1986. Pp. 354-355.

[104] Healey, S.J., Charles J. *Christian spirituality. An introduction to the heritage*. St. Paul. 1999. New York. pp. 236-238.

[105] Ibid. pp. 236-238.

20th-century Christian meditation. Knowing by personal awareness, connecting with our real self

20th-century Christian meditation also reflects apophatic spirituality. It is influenced by the Eastern meditation insights explained above, reflected in Thomas Merton's spirituality, the Centering Prayer of Thomas Keating, and the Christian Meditation of John Main and Lawrence Freeman.

John Main (1926 – 1982) studied law at Trinity College, Ireland, and after graduating, he spent two years in Malaya. There he learned to meditate with Swami Satyananda, using a Christian mantra. He returned to Ireland, became a Benedictine monk, and while studying the Desert Fathers, he realized their commonalities with Hindu meditation. With Laurence Freeman (1951), they created The World Community for Christian Meditation around Christian meditation. John Main recommends:

> Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything – spiritual or otherwise. If thoughts or images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so keep returning to simply saying the word. Meditate each morning and evening for between twenty and thirty minutes.[106]

Maranatha means "Lord come" in Aramaic.

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106 https://wccm.org/weekly-teachings/is-meditation-really-part-of-the-christian-tradition/

Spirituality is a central part of a realist epistemology

These intuitions introduce us to the world of epistemology. Epistemology refers to the philosophical study of human knowledge's nature, origin, and limits (Encyclopedia Britannica).

We rely on three epistemologies in our daily lives: empiricism, subjective idealism, and realism.

Empiricism is the view that knowledge begins in the senses; all concepts originate in experience, through the five senses; there are no "apriori truths," all concepts are about or applicable to things that can be experienced; all rationally acceptable beliefs or propositions are justifiable or knowable only through experience (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Empiricism is a fragile epistemology that generates relativism, subjectivism, skepticism, individualism, psychologism and associationism.

Subjective idealism, also called rationalism, is the point of view that considers reason to be the main source and proof of knowledge. Holding that reality has an intrinsically logical structure, rationalists claim that there is a class of truths that the intellect can grasp directly. There are, according to rationalists, certain rational principles-especially in logic and mathematics, and even in ethics and metaphysics that are so fundamental that to deny them is to fall into contradiction (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Some ideas are universal and unquestionable: mathematics, freedom, equality, rights, justice, non-discrimination, the rule of law, prosperity for all, security and religious pluralism; rationalism strives to construct a perfect ideal world. Subjective idealism is a fragile and unscientific epistemology that can ignore reality, promote radicalism, abuse rights and sacrifice the individual.

Realism, in philosophy, is the viewpoint which accords to things which are known or perceived an existence or nature which is independent of whether anyone is thinking about or perceiving them (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

A realist epistemology has three main foundations of knowledge.

Aristotle's realism has an empiricist foundation: sensitive faculties perceive an object, a person; the intellect captures the universal, the idea, the form, the essence.

Plato's realism, Saint Augustine, Bonaventure, and Guardini has an idealist foundation, which incorporates the knowledge that arises from meditation, contemplation, in short, that incorporates spirituality.

The realism of St. Thomas Aquinas relies on both foundations of knowledge, and integrates them. The realism of Cornelius Fabro also incorporates the intuitions of 20th-century phenomenology, how reality manifests itself through multiple phenomena, and how each person can perceive some of these phenomena better than others.

Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas: the sensitive and intellectual dimensions of knowledge

According to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, a person's sensitive faculties perceive an object, a thing, a person; the intellect captures the universal, the idea, the form, the essence after its material is presented to it by the senses. Singular knowledge, art, and science come from experience:

> Art comes into being when from many conceptions acquired by experience, a single universal judgment is formed about similar things.[107]

[107] Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Translated By W. D. Ross. http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/-384_-322,_Aristoteles,_13_Metaphysics,_EN.pdf. p. 6.

> Science, which is called wisdom, deals with the primary causes and principles of things.[108]

Science has to do with the causes. The more a person knows about the causes, the wiser he or she becomes. A wise man is someone that knows the causes and principles of the entire universe. Wisdom has to do with first causes. Knowing the universals means knowing in a sense all things.

The contribution of Aristotle to realism is crucial: his empirical orientation ensures that realism involves practical and rational knowledge.

Plato and the spiritual dimension of knowledge

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato (c. 423 – c.347 BCE) presented a response to Greek philosophers' skepticism and contradictions. Heraclitus defended that everything is in a permanent change; Parmenides defended that reality is one. Change is impossible; the Sophists defend that each person has different knowledge, truth, and values are not universal, and are subjective, versus Socrates defends universal virtues and values. It seemed that the defense of permanent ideas, of permanent values and virtues, of permanent ethics was falling apart.

Plato's notion of ideas, universal forms, perfect, unchanged, was a good response. It is not valid any more than there are no permanent values, no universal truths, that everything is relative, that each person has a different truth, and that the truths are subjective and relative.

According to Plato, sensations are a road to knowledge, but such knowledge is imperfect, more opinion than sound knowledge. Con-

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[108] Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Translated By W. D. Ross. http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/-384_-322,_Aristoteles,_13_Metaphysics,_EN.pdf. p. 13.

sequently, each person has different degrees of knowledge, some closer to the truth than others, but there are universal truths unquestionably. Through the body's sensations, a person perceives the immaterial forms, the forms of the good, beauty, truth. All knowledge requires prior experience of the form of the good. In the Ladder of Love described in "In Symposium," Plato escalates from the knowledge of a concrete object: "a beautiful body," to "all beautiful bodies," all the way to knowledge: "Beauty itself."

Therefore, it is possible to accept the diversity of ideas without sacrificing the universal truth's existence. This was important in a moment in history when Greece was in contact with different cultures: Babylon, Egypt, the Middle East, and their religions, which produced a general skepticism.

The value of Plato's intuitions is the introduction of spirituality into realism.

Cornelio Fabro introduces a phenomenological view. The role of perceptions, spirituality

Cornelio Fabro introduces a phenomenological view at realist epistemology in several of his books: "L'anima" (the soul), "Percezione e pensiero" (perceptions and thinking), and "La fenomenologia della percezione" (the phenomenology of perceptions).

According to Fabro:

> The dominant function in the cognitive life is the perception, not the sensation; because in the perception flow sensibility, affectivity, intelligence according to the plastic convergence of the effective force of life, and according to the structure of our own psyches. The perception indicates the immediate apprehension

> of the existence of an act or an object in the realm of an internal or external experience.[109]

The perception can apprehend an entire object made of multiple parts, multiple objects being part of a whole realm, and apprehend its qualities, order, and organization.

The perception is not just pure sensation or pure thought; it is the exercise of human consciousness; it produces a unified awareness. As Fabro states: "this is the most simple hypothesis, passing gradually from dispersed and insignificant elementary data, towards the construction of a whole, endowed with structure and meaning."

The value of Fabro's views is the introduction of phenomenology into realism and together with that, all human, personal, and community knowledge.

Martin Buber. Spirituality helps to connect with the other; human relationships are manifestations of spirituality

As Martin Buber described, spirituality helps to connect with the other through dialogue, communication, and encounter; human relationships manifest spiritual lives, a spiritual dialogue, and a spiritual connection:

> Feelings dwell in man; but man dwells in his love. That is no metaphor, but the actual truth. Love does not cling to the I in such a way as to have the Thou only for its "content," its object; but love is between I and Thou. The man who does not know this, with his very being know this, does not know love; even

[109] Fabro, Cornelio. *L' anima. Introduzione al problema dell' uomo*. Editrice del Verbo Incarnato. 2005. Italy. p. 32.

> though he ascribes to it the feelings he lives through, experiences, enjoys, and expresses.[110]

The "I-Thou" relation expresses an encounter between two persons, a "dialogical relationship," two subjects, who experience a mutually enrichening human experience, both affirming individually and affirming the other as whole beings, both "I" and "Thou" grow in the relationship, the dialogical relationship enables a dynamic living process.

Martin Heidegger. We are members of a human community, sharing experiences, impacting each other, a society in dialogue

For Martin Heidegger, people need to find a meaning for their limited existence as persons belonging to a community that shares the same limitations, anxieties of death, and moods. To be human means to be relational:

> Why is love beyond all measure of other human possibilities so rich and such a sweet burden for the one who has been struck by it? Because we change ourselves into that which we love, and yet remain ourselves. Then we would like to thank the beloved, but find nothing that would do it adequately. We can only be thankful to ourselves. Love transforms gratitude into faithfulness to ourselves and into an unconditional faith in the Other. Thus love steadily expands its most intimate secret. Closeness here is existence in the greatest distance from the other- the distance that allows nothing to dissolve - but rather presents the "thou" in the transparent, but "incomprehensible" revelation of the

[110] Martin Buber. *Ich und Du (I and Thou).* 1923. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. T $ T Clark. 1937. Edinburgh. https://archive.org/stream/IAndThou_572/BuberMartin-i-and-thou_djvu.txt.

> "just there." That the presence of the other breaks into our own life - this is what no feeling can fully encompass. Human fate gives itself to human fate, and it is the task of pure love to keep this self-surrender as vital as on the first day.[111]

We are historical and social beings, beings in the world, who share the experience of being, exist with others, are members of a human community, impact others, and are impacted by their plans, actions of others, are involved and committed to other lives.

We are on a journey to find ourselves and the truth: "The grandeur of man is measured according to what he seeks and according to the urgency by which he remains a seeker."[112]

This fosters a relational, tolerant attitude, a society in dialogue, accepting differences as all journeying towards the truth.

Dietrich Von Hildebrand. Spirituality connects with the heart, the voice of the personal soul, the root of all affectivity, and empathy; values are the unifying force that builds communities

As Dietrich Von Hildebrand described, spirituality connects with the heart. The heart is the voice of the personal soul, the root of all affectivity, empathy, and values are the unifying force that builds communities, the desire to give oneself to the other, to seek the happiness of the other, to participate in the goodness of the other, love produces joy, delight, vulnerability:

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111 http://braungardt.trialectics.com/philosophy/20th-century/martin-heidegger-1889-1976/

112Heidegger, Martin. *What Is Metaphysics?* The basic text of Heidegger's inaugural lecture at the U. of Freiburg in 1929. http://naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Heidegger,Martin/Heidegger.Martin..What%20Is%20Metaphysics.htm.

The basic attitude of reverence is the presupposition for every true love, above all, the love of neighbor, because it alone opens our eyes to the value of men as spiritual persons, and because, without this awareness, no love is possible. Reverence for the beloved one is also an essential element of every love. To give attention to the specific meaning and value of his individuality, to display consideration toward him, instead of forcing our wishes on him, is part of reverence. It is from reverence that there flows the willingness of a lover to grant the beloved the spiritual "space" needed to freely express his own individuality. All these elements of every true love flow from reverence. What would a mother's love be without reverence for the growing being, for all the possibilities of value that yet lie dormant, for the preciousness of the child's soul? […] Beauty kindles love, and only the one who remains captivated by it, only the one who is intoxicated by it, only the one who remains a lover while he is investigating its essence, can hope to penetrate its essence […] Love is not concerned with a person's accomplishments, it is a response to a person's being: This is why a typical word of love is to say: I love you, because you are as you are […] To whom will the sublime beauty of a sunset or a Ninth Symphony of Beethoven reveal itself, but to him who approaches it reverently and unlocks his heart to it? To whom will the mystery that lies in life and manifests itself in every plant reveal itself in its full splendor, but to him who contemplates it reverently? But he who sees in it only a means of subsistence or of earning money, that is, something that can be used or employed, will not discover the meaning, structure, and significance of the world in its beauty and hidden dignity […] When we love somebody, whether it be a friend, a parent, a child, whether it be conjugal love or neighborly love,

> the beloved person always stands before us as something precious and noble in himself.[113]

The heart is the voice of the personal soul. The heart is the root of all affectivity. The heart characterizes the person: love, friendship, filial, and parental love. The heart helps to value the cosmos and perceive the people's value.

The truly affectionate man is preoccupied with the good of the other. The lover wants to fill the heart of the loved one. The subjectivist is worried only about himself. The objectivist has a utilitarian concept of affection.

Edith Stein. Spirituality promotes empathy, builds community

As Edith Stein described, spirituality promotes empathy, a social, ethical, and aesthetic phenomenon that leads persons to undergo others' experiences and feelings; consciousness fosters empathy, builds community, suffering fosters compassion, and feeling the pain of vulnerable others. She volunteered as a nurse for wounded soldiers and confronted their pains, vulnerabilities, and grief; this experience impacted her doctoral dissertation: she studied under Husserl; at age 26, she wrote her dissertation "On the Problem of Empathy":[114]

> As for what concerns our relations with our fellow men, the anguish in our neighbor's soul must break all precept. All that we

[113] von Hildebrand, Dietrich. *The Art of Living*. Hildebrand Project. 2017. Ohio.

[114] Stein, Edith. *On the Problem of Empathy*. ICS Publications. 1989. Washington D.C.

> do is a means to an end, but love is an end in itself, because God is love.[115]
>
> You can be at all fronts, wherever there is grief, in the power of the cross. Your compassionate love takes you everywhere, this love from the divine heart. Its precious blood is poured everywhere, soothing, healing, saving.[116]

Empathy is a social, ethical, and aesthetic phenomenon that leads persons to experience another subject's experiences to directly feel others' pain, eliminating modern subjectivism and individualism.

How is it possible to have a community? Although the ego's consciousness is isolated, it can enter into a community with other egos through each other's empathy. One person can feel and understand another person's experiences, knowing the other person and joining others' feelings.

Different types of empathy are related to Scheler's values: sensual or bodily empathy, such as the feeling of awake versus tired, healthy versus ill, or related to moods; emotional empathy, related to happiness; and ethical empathy, related to the feeling of goodness.

One subject has different worldviews and can perceive others' views and values, which can correlate with the subject's values. This generates positive or negative feelings, values, and love, which impact consciousness.

Hannah Arendt. Consciousness leads to social integration, human relationships toward world peace

Arendt introduces a new dimension of phenomenology: the public dimension, such as being born, being caught in the world, and the

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[115] Stein, Edith. Letters. https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=568

[116] Stein, Edith. *Edith Stein: Essential Writings*. Orbis Books. Maryknoll. 2002. New York. p.131.

experience of the between, the public. She was aware of how this public world can be manipulated by the government, public organizations, and some people.

As she described, phenomenology leads to social integration. It promotes human relationships, a return to the world, towards a world in peace; isolation and atomization lead to massification and totalitarianism.

Emanuel Levinas. Consciousness, the human face, and expression lead to encounters; ethics based on relationships and sensibility

As Emanuel Levinas described, ethics is based on relationships, on the human face, expression, human encounter, integration, sensibility, the pillars of the other's ethics, goodness, responsibility, and justice of the knowing subject, language expression of personal identity.

The face connects a person to another, expressing what the other needs, nakedness, sensibility.

> An infinite resistance to murder […] firm and insurmountable, gleams in the face of the Other, in the total nudity of his defenseless eyes, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent.[117]

This provokes the goodness of the knowing subject, his or her freedom, and responsibility.

> The face presents itself, and demands justice. […] The being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing

[117] Levinas, Emannuel. *Totality and Infinity*: *An Essay on Exteriority*. Duquesne University Press, 1969. Pittsburgh. p. 199.

> to me with its destitution and nudity–its hunger–without my being able to be deaf to that appeal. Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness. […] The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no "interiority" permits a voiding. […] The will is free to assume this responsi-bility in whatever sense it likes; it is not free to refuse this responsibility itself; it is not free to ignore the meaningful world into which the face of the Other has introduced it.[118]

This is the outcome of the expression; it produces ethical sensibility and behavior. It generates the language, the different ways of language which express the differences and commonalities; the language expresses what each person is, their essence, and the essence of the world that each person communicates.

Karol Wojtyła. Everyday life spirituality to discover the value of the person, the primacy of love

Several factors influenced Wojtyła's spiritual orientation as part of everyday life: his father, an army officer, "the captain;" their home, a domestic seminary, praying the rosary and teaching the Bible to Karol; Wojtyła's struggles during the Nazi and Soviet invasions, he had to work hard in a quarry and at the Solvay chemical factory, suffering three accidents, being hit by a tram and trucks, hiding and barely escaping while several thousand around him were killed.

Jan Leopold Tyranowski was a layman, an accountant by profession, who became a "staretz," a spiritual guide:

> He was one of those unknown saints, hidden amid the others like a marvellous light at the bottom of life, at a depth where

[118] Levinas, Emannuel. *Totality and Infinity*: *An Essay on Exteriority*. Duquesne University Press, 1969. Pittsburgh. p. 214.

> night usually reigns. He disclosed to me the riches of his inner life, of his mystical life. In his words, in his spirituality and in the example of a life given to God alone, he represented a new world that I did not yet know. I saw the beauty of a soul opened up by grace.[119]

Tyranowski introduced Wojtyła to Saint John of the Cross' profound spirituality, which is rich in symbolism, phenomenological. Wojtyła's phenomenological view of spirituality was also enriched by poetry and drama.

Wojtyła received a Thomist education. Nevertheless, Wojtyła followed a different route based on "the testimony of experience," as he writes in the introduction "[…] without using technical terminology, but relying exclusively on experience and practice,"[120] a mystical orientation.

His education led him to merge Thomism with the phenomenology of Scheler and the spirituality of Saint John of the Cross:

> My previous Aristotelian-Thomistic formation was enriched by the phenomenological method, and this made it possible for me to undertake a number of creative studies. I am thinking above all of my book The Acting Person. In this way I took part in the contemporary movement of philosophical personalism, and my studies were able to bear fruit in my pastoral work. I have often noticed how many of the ideas developed in these studies have helped me in my meetings with persons and with great numbers of the faithful during my apostolic visits. My formation within

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119 Anderson, Clare. "The Tailor-Mystic Who Inspired a Pope." *Faith Magazine*. 2014. https://www.faith.org.uk/article/march-april-2014-the-tailor-mystic-who-inspired-a-pope.

120 Wojtyła, Karol. *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*. Ignatius Press. 1981. San Francisco, California.

> the cultural horizon of personalism also gave me a deeper awareness of how each person is a unique person.[121]

John J. Conley, S.J.,[122] proposes an additional insight into how the interaction between Thomism and phenomenology provides valuable ethical support:

> The phenomenological and Thomistic strands in John Paul II's philosophy serve a common anthropological project - the defense of the besieged human person in contemporary society - by showing that the person cannot be reduced to a material phenomenon and cannot be used a means toward a putative social end. [123]

Phenomenology enriches realism by introducing the role of consciousness

Phenomenology highlights the centrality of "consciousness," becoming aware of something, and the emotive feelings it generates.

David Detmer[124] defines phenomenology as "the study of the essential structures of experience;" "the objects of experience are not only physical but also numbers, values, feelings, time, truth;" "the acts of consciousness are thinking, perceiving, imagining, doubting,

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121 McLean O.M.I., George F. *Karol Wojtyła's Mutual Enrichment of the Philosophies of Being and Consciousness*. Prologue to Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007. p. 71.

122 Conley, S.J, John J. "Philosophy and Anti-Philosophy: The Ambiguous Legacy of John Paul II." *Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007.

123 Conley, S.J, John J. "Philosophy and Anti-Philosophy: The Ambiguous Legacy of John Paul II." *Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007. p. 38.

124 Detmer, David. *Phenomenology explained, from experience to insight*. Open Court Publishing Company. 2013. Chicago. Illinois.

questioning, loving, hating, by and through such objects are disclosed."

Detmer explains that phenomenology has essential goals: to build fidelity between experience and truth; to understand the structure of the phenomena; to understand the structure of meanings; to understand the world; to study consciousness; to study and describe every possible object: natural, cultural, ideal, historical, social, political, economic, legal.

Integrating spirituality with psychology and morality

Louis Bouyer[125] states that phenomenology integrates spirituality with psychology and morality. The phenomenological "Intentionality" connects a person internally, with others and the world, promoting harmony, virtues, and happiness.

According to Sokolowski,[126] "the core doctrine of phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform," every experience that we have, is "intentional": it is essentially "consciousness of" or an "experience of" something or other; all our awareness is directed toward objects, "what we see, what we imagine, what we remember, what we judge, is correlated with an object."

This doctrine of "intentionality" is critical; human acts of consciousness are oriented toward objects. As Sokolowski stresses:

> In the Cartesian, Hobessian and Lockean tradition, which dominate our culture, we are told that when we are conscious, we are primarily aware of ourselves or our own ideas; […] consciousness is taken to be like a bubble or an enclosed cabinet; […] we

[125] Bouyer, Louis. Introduction to spirituality. Liturgical Press. Minnesota. 1961.

[126] Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to phenomenology*. 1999. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. U.K.

> are caught in an egocentric predicament; […] if we are bereft of intentionality, if we do not have a world in common, then we do not enter into a life of reason, evidence and truth, each of us turn into his own private world; […] the denial of intentionality has as its correlate the denial of the mind's orientation toward truth; […] things that had been declared to be merely psychological are not found to be ontological; […] pictures, words, symbols, perceived objects, states of affairs, other minds, laws, and social conventions are all acknowledged as truly there; […] it helps to understand differences, identities; […] it is contemplative and theoretic.

This "contemplative" attitude is at the core of phenomenology: any person can reach the truth, naturally, before any philosophical involvement; arts and sciences can add valuable data, but in the end, the person relies on contemplation, and common sense.

> We naturally reply that if psychology is given its old meaning, phenomenology is not descriptive psychology: its peculiar 'pure' description, its contemplation of pure essences on a basis of exemplary person intuitions of experiences (often freely imagined ones), and its descriptive fixation of the contemplated essences into pure concepts, is no empirical, scientific description.[127]
>
> We may now discover the previously missing differences between an assertive, and a merely contemplative, consciousness of the universal. Where we contemplate a universal object in a merely analogizing, imaginative fashion, we may also mean it assertively, and this act, like any assertive reference, may be confirmed or refuted by adequate future perception. The former

[127] Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations*. First published in German as Logische Untersuchungen by M. Niemeyer, Halle 1900/1901. First published in English by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1970. England. p. 95.

> happens wherever the universal meaning is fulfilled by an adequate percept, i.e. by a new consciousness of the universal which constitutes itself on the basis of a 'true' abstraction from the corresponding person percept.[128]

Phenomenology is crucial in the battle against subjectivism, relativism, psychologism

For Husserl, phenomenology requires a complete separation from psychology:

> The ideal of a pure phenomenology will be perfected only by answering this question; pure phenomenology is to be separated sharply from psychology at large and, specifically, from the descriptive psychology of the phenomena of consciousness.[129]

Sokolowski explains why such separation:

> Phenomenology has waged a heroic struggle against psychologism from the beginning; it tries to show that the activity of achieving meaning, truth, and logical reasoning is not just a feature of our psychological or biological makeup, but that it enters into a new domain, a domain of rationality, a domain that goes beyond the psychological; besides looking at the wring of the brain, we must also look at the fact that things can be distinguished into wholes and parts, that they can be perceived and pictured, that essentials and accidentals can be distinguished in them when they present themselves to us; […] even though we

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128 Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations*. First published in German as Logische Untersuchungen by M. Niemeyer, Halle 1900/1901. First published in English by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1970. England. p. 359.

129 Moran, Dermot; Mooney, Timothy. *The Phenomenology Reader*. Routledge. 2002. London, New York. p.127.

> are biological and psychological creatures, even though our perceptions and judgments require a brain and nervous system and subjective reactions, when we get into the activity of judging, verifying and reasoning, we formulate meanings and achieve presentations that can be distinguished from our biological and psychological way of being; they can be communicated to others, they can be recorded, they can be used as premises in arguments, they can be confirmed and disconfirmed; they have a kind of subsistence; they can be shown to be true or false in themselves, quite apart from our subjectivity; it is the meanings themselves that can be consistent or contradictory, it is the judgements themselves that are true or false.[130]

David Detmer[131] stresses Husserl's radicalism in six ways: 1. Husserl is not concerned just by the meaning of a specific claim, but he focuses on the nature of meaning, evidence, and truth; 2. Husserl does not accept unexamined assumptions; nothing is given in advance; instead, one goes "back to the things themselves," "going to the roots;" 3. Husserl affirms the value of reason of the Enlightenment, but he expands it to involve the lifeworld, the world of lived experience, in all its diversity and complexity; 4. Husserl accepts the experience of empiricism, but he expands to include other phenomena coming from consciousness, memory, imagination, including logical, ethical, aesthetic, political data, such as values; 5. Husserl accepts subjectivity, as long as it does not result in a massive relativism: the subject knows the objects, and from that, only one truth should emerge; 6. Husserl focuses not just on the methodology but also the findings.

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130 Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to phenomenology*. 1999. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. U.K. pp. 115-116.

131 Detmer, David. *Phenomenology explained, from experience to insight*. Open Court Publishing Company. 2013. Chicago. Illinois.

This ends the subjectivism and relativism of empiricism; it opens the door to universal truths, to the people's ability to communicate, create communities, and share truths.

As Detmer describes, for Husserl, the radicalization of sciences led to eliminating all non-factual or rational knowledge, such as values, meanings, emotions, strivings, and human subjectivity, leading to reductionism alienation. Some subjective claims are relative (I prefer strawberries), but some subjective claims are not relative (happiness is better than misery). Intuitions lead to discovering the essence of things; no matter who perceives the object, the essence is the same, eliminating all relativism. The irrelevant can be eliminated, discovering the essences and meanings, the good or bad, better or worse.

Phenomenology enriches realism by introducing diversity towards a universal truth

Robert Sokolowski[132] proposes another definition of phenomenology: "it is the study of human experience and of the ways things present to us through such experience."

Through experience, people can reach the truth (in some cases an incomplete, imperfect truth), open themselves to listen to others, to the value of language, words, symbols, images, pictures, indications, and signals produced by others.

People perceive diverse aspects of the same reality. Looking at an apple, an economist can see an economical product subject to the supply and demand, a poet a piece of life, a philosopher a being with substance and accidents, a scientist a set of tissues and molecules, a hungry person will see something delightful to eat and enjoy. So, what is an apple after considering so many different perceptions?

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132 Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to phenomenology*. 1999. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. U.K.

Empiricism does not have a way to articulate perspectives that are not empirical. Subjective idealism cannot articulate chaotic information, is incapable of capturing the richness of reality. Empiricism and idealism would condemn persons to isolation, social disintegration, relativism, fanaticism, conflicts, impoverishing their views because of their limited perception of reality with all its richness.

Phenomenology understands that reality is manifold. It manifests by different phenomena. Each person can perceive different phenomena differently, therefore perceiving some aspects of reality better than others.

Phenomenology proposes mechanisms so people can integrate and harmonize their perceptions to get closer to the truth. Phenomenology sets communication channels among individuals, reflection, contemplation, meditation, intuition, symbols, metaphors, hermeneutics, analogies, affections, emotions, and empathy; even though we all have different ways to perceive reality, we can find mechanisms to have a deeper understanding of reality.

Phenomenology defends the notion that we may receive a variety of phenomena: manifold information from objects, different perspectives on the same object, different views that people in different positions can present of the same object, different perceptions of people that can perceive different phenomena, perceive the reality in different ways. However, those diverse phenomena refer to the same reality; a person can separate the essence from the accidents, integrate the different phenomena, and know the truth.

This creates collective knowledge and leads to discovering higher realities; it creates relationships and community; it leads to transformations, healing, and social action.

II.

SPIRITUALITY LEADS OUR LIVES ON A JOURNEY TO TRANSCENDENCE (BEAUTY, GOODNESS, AND TRUTH) AND LOVE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the second dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in every person and community: the power to appreciate and create transcendence, beauty, goodness, truth, leading us on a journey toward the creator of transcendence, toward his love for creation. Discovering our life as a journey toward beauty, goodness, truth, and love is an extraordinary source of happiness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter has a great impact on our lives: as people, we need a vision of our future to be happy and successful, to have a sense of our lives, an ideal, our vocation, to transform and overcome suffering, to transform ourselves, to promote social action.

This chapter has a great impact on nations and organizations, which need a vision of the future, an ideal to promote their success.

World peace results from spirituality enlightening and inspiring our appreciation of transcendence, leading us on a shared journey toward creating transcendence and love.

Summary of the chapter

Anyone can appreciate transcendence during the day: anyone can enjoy a beautiful landscape, the beauty of children, the reading of a good book, the joy of beautiful music; anyone can contemplate the magnificence of the universe, the galaxies that are hundreds of millions of light-years away, the massive stars; anyone can contemplate

the microcosm, the perfection of our bodies, their biology. The contemplation of transcendence is a powerful source of happiness.

The appreciation of transcendence can lead us to become creators of transcendence, beauty, goodness, truth, become agents of transformation in our daily activities: through our work, giving life, creating families, creating and performing music, and many other ways.

Anyone contemplating transcendence may wonder who created such perfection.

Contemplating the transcendence of reality can lead us to discover the supreme source of transcendence: a superior being who "participates" his perfections with creatures, a God full of love who shares his perfection with creatures out of love.

Contemplating a God full of beauty, goodness, truth, and love can lead us on a journey toward him.

Our spiritual journey: contemplation, discovering transcendence, leading toward the union with the One

Neoplatonism explains how the contemplation of reality leads to discovering the supreme source of being, goodness, and beauty.

The One, the Supreme Being, the Creator, God, is the origin of transcendence. When we discover transcendence, we discover the One, which invites us to walk toward the One.

The One begets all things because the One is the supreme perfection, and the good diffuses itself: the soul descends from the One, continues connected with the One, and journeys toward the One.

As Kees Waaijman states, spiritual traditions rely on the journey, the way:

> Jewish spirituality is reflected in the way to go, the way of life that human beings must follow; Buddhist spirituality reflects the road to enlightenment through meditation; Chinese spirituality

> presents the Tao, the way of nature; Hellenistic spirituality presents "the way of purgation, which leads away from the material, the non-being; the way of enlightenment, which awakens and develops insight into the real world; the way of union, which is an ecstatic participation in the highest reality;" Christian spirituality adopted these 3 ways, in union with Christ; Islamic spirituality reflects the way to God.[1]

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam spirituality rely on Neoplatonism: for Neoplatonism, the practice of contemplation, purification, asceticism are ways to avoid the body's burden to reach the union with the One.

Transcendence leads to discovering God's existence

For Thomas Aquinas the existence of God does not start with religious subjectivity but rather with the observation of the exterior world.

In our daily experience, we discover that there are objects, movement, changes. What causes the existence of such objects, of movement?

Aristotle introduces metaphysics, which presents four causes to explain them. The material cause, the matter of a thing, for example a table made of wood, that of which a thing is composed, a thing comes to be; that which remains throughout the process of generation and corruption, the substance of a thing that remains throughout every transmutation. The formal cause, its shape, its principle of determination, by which we know what each thing is. The efficient cause, the agent, the source of motion. The final cause, the purpose of a thing, the goal of motion, its intention, reason, and end.

Aristotle explains the need for the existence of a first-mover:

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[1] Waaijman, Kees. The way, root metaphor for spirituality. A Biblical Exploration. *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. p. 65.

> There is something which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. And the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.[2]

One agent is the efficient cause of others. For example, a previous fire is the efficient cause of this fire. However, what was the efficient cause of the previous fire? The efficient causes can be escalated until one reaches the first agent responsible for all movement. Similarly, material cause calls for a first of all matter. Regarding the final cause, that for the sake of which something comes to have the character of an end or a good, but an end does not exist for the sake of other things, but others exist for its sake.

The magnificence of the universe, the world's beauty, and the goodness that everyone contemplates require an Absolute Being to have those characteristics in an infinite magnitude.

This is a crucial contribution of Aristotle's metaphysics: the discovery of the existence of a God, the first mover, the first author, the first agent, the origin of all good, of all truth, of all beauty, the final purpose of the universe.

As Cornelio Fabro describes:

> Knowing God is the supreme task of the human intelligence: God in fact is the supreme good that generates all goodness, the first truth that enlightens all truths as its foundation.

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[2]Aristotle. *Metaphysics.* Translated By W. D. Ross. http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/-384_-322,_Aristoteles,_13_Metaphysics,_EN.pdf. p. 179.

> Aristotle proves the existence of the science of truth, not from any truth, but from the truth that is the source of all truths, that which belongs to the first principle of the being of all things, its truth the principle of all truths.
>
> The human intellect depends on its understanding of the sensible experience and all our concepts not only derive from the empirical reality and from the observation of physical nature, but always refer to the same thing, so that the concept of a reality with no sensible characters is impossible as long as we are on earth. These two characters of God's supreme transcendence and spirituality mark the limits of our knowledge of the divine nature.[3]

To overcome this limitation, metaphysics introduces the notion of "analogy" to describe a God that everyone cannot see, based on the attributes of the creation that everyone can see. The existence of wisdom leads to a God with infinite wisdom; perfections and goodness lead to God's infinite perfection and goodness; the existence of beauty, love, truth leads to a God who has infinite beauty, love, truth. God is simple, without composition of parts; God is perfect, lacking nothing, complete actuality; God is infinite; God is immutable, incapable of change in essence and character; God is one, without diversification; God has virtues that that deal with actions: prudence, justice, truth, liberality, magnificence, prudence, and art, and also god has virtues that deal with contemplation: wisdom, science, intellect.

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[3] Fabro, Cornelio. *Dio, Introduzione al problema teologico*. Editrice del Verbo Incarnato. 1953. Italy. p. 97.

Our journey toward the "participation" with the One, the Transcendent, the summit of all perfections, of all beauty, goodness, truth

In the "La nozione metafisica di partecipazione Secondo Santo Tomasso d' Aquino" (The metaphysical notion of participation according to Saint Thomas), Cornelio Fabro presents a thorough investigation on the notion of "participation."

He starts by the everyday use of the word participation: as a member of a community participates in shared goals, shared knowledge, collective will, feelings, actions, happiness, and sadness.

For Plato, participation is founded on how "the many" (the creatures) have common forms: many real trees have in common the formality of a tree. Participation refers to the connection between the sensible realities and universal ideas and how particular singular beings participate from universal ideas.

In Plato's participation, the many participate in the One's reality (God, the Supreme Being, the Creator), who is transcendent, the summit of all perfections, beauty, goodness, and truth. John participates his humanity on the universal concept of man, the transcendental idea of man.

Plato's participation explains transcendence (beauty, goodness, truth), impacting persons and the community's vocation for transcendence and happiness.

Aristotle had a different understanding of participation. For him, a form is found in the real world with a higher or lower degree of perfection, with more or less plenitude. A perfect being is the final cause of such limited perfection of creatures, which participates its perfection in different degrees to existing creatures. In Aristotle's participation, the One is the final cause of the many's perfections; the One participates in its perfection to the many in different degrees.

Thomas Aquinas proposed a synthesis of both views on participation.

For Thomas, the universal is an intellectual abstraction produced by the mind. However, it reflects reality: it is an abstraction from the sensible reality.

The One participates its being unto the many. All the created perfection are diverse modes of participation from God's infinite perfection. People can know about God by knowing the degrees of perfection of the creatures that participate in God's perfection.

God also participates in the intellectuality of the creatures. Everyone can learn, reach the truth, make responsible decisions, and understand God's laws.

In Aquinas and Fabro's participation, the degrees of perfection of the various creatures, from the less to the more perfect, lead to discovering higher levels of perfection, the existence of an order, a plan for creation, which enlightens personal wisdom, fosters motivation for social transformation.

Saint John's Gospel. Our spiritual journey toward God, the source of light, life

Louis Bouyer[4] shows how Saint John presents several images of our journey toward transcendence: the image of "light" that symbolizes the divine glory, the word of God, the source of life; the river of living water that invites us to drink, to be in His presence: (Psalm 35) "In your light we shall see light, with you is the source of life."

According to Bouyer, our journey toward life reflects John's vision that human history must flow into the glory of eternity, proceed from God, and flow toward God, the light.

As Bouyer explains, John connects the miracles to this image:

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[4] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 122-123.

> The healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda following the teaching on the water of life; the healing of the born blind, the teaching of the light of the world; it contains lengthy discourses like the bread of life, the discourse after the Last Supper. Through them we find the fundamental theme of the Apocalypse: the entrance into glory through tribulation and the immediately glorious character of tribulation through faithfulness to God's will. [5]

Origen of Alexandria. Our spiritual journey upward, to the One, to the Promised Land, to love

Origen of Alexandria (c. 184 – c. 253) introduced Christian Platonism in his view of spirituality as a journey toward the One, beauty, and good, toward our assimilation to become images of God.

According to McGinn, Origen of Alexandria presents our journey from the One (creation) to the One (union) in Neoplatonic terms, imitating Jesus, and relying on spirituality. Origen describes this process of return as an ascension, a journey upward. The language of the Bible, its exegesis, and the process of religious and mystical experience enlighten that ascension journey.

As Elemire Zolla describes, Origen relies on a Neoplatonic image applied to Christianity: spirituality is a journey to the One, similar to the journey of the Israelites toward their promised land, toward the state of perfect rest where he lulls himself like the doves (the symbol of the Holy Spirit). In the first stage, we leave the baptismal Red Sea through faith; in the second stage, we enter the desert of aridity (from Exodus to Deuteronomy); the third stage is done in the wells, in the vision of the mysteries that emerge between the sands; in the fourth, we enter the precious land, where not only is our thirst

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[5] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 122-123.

quenched with the water from the wells, but we are nourished with honey, but always fighting with the demons; the fifth stage is the victory over the eight vices, the eight Canaanite peoples; sixth, the betrothal with the Bridegroom, which begins to appear in the soul; seventh, the dialogue with the Bridegroom.[6]

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty[7] explains how, according to Origen, the journey of the Israelites reflected in seven songs symbolizes our spiritual journeys:

- The first song of our spiritual journey, when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea: "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea. My strength and my refuge is the LORD, and he has become my savior." (Ex. 15:1,2). They were freed from slavery; the Red Sea symbolizes the baptism in which we, God's chosen people, get freed from sin and slavery. [8]
- The second song of our spiritual journey, when the Israelites were crossing the desert: "Then Israel sang this song: Spring up, O well! —so sing to it— The well that the princes sank, that the nobles of the people dug, With their scepters and their staffs— from the wilderness, a gift." (Num 21:17-18). Through those wells in the desert, God gave his people fountains of living water, through their spiritual leaders, to cross our spiritual deserts.[9]

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[6] Zolla, Elemira. Los Místicos de Occidente. Volumen I. Mundo antiguo pagano y Cristiano. Ediciones Paidós Ibérica. Spain. 2000. p. 282

[7] Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. A Patristic Commentary on The Song Of Songs. Translated By Ferial Moawad English Text. Revised by: Rafik & Mary Nicola, Nagui Abdelsayed & Linda Ragheb. St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church. Sporting – Alexandria.

[8] Ibid. p. 8.

[9] Ibid. p. 9.

- The third song of our spiritual journey, when they are at the banks of the Jordan River: "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth! Remember the days of old, consider the years of generations past Ask your father, he will inform you, your elders, they will tell you. He found them in a wilderness, a wasteland of howling desert. He shielded them, cared for them, guarded them as the apple of his eye. As an eagle incites its nestlings, hovering over its young, So he spread his wings, took them, bore them upon his pinions. The LORD alone guided them, no foreign god was with them." (Deut. 32:1,10-12). The Lord cared for us in the wilderness, spiritually and physically, as a father cares for his children.[10]
- The fourth song: "On that day Deborah sang this song: LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the plains of Edom, The earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured rain, The mountains streamed" (Jud. 1,4-6). God multiplied his miracles in our spiritual journeys, breaking mountains, providing us waters of life.[11]
- The fifth song: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1-2). In the middle of our anguish battling our enemies, the Lord is our refuge.[12]
- The sixth song: "Now let me sing of my friend, my beloved's song about his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; He spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; Within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a wine press." (Isaiah, 5:1,2). We sing to our friend, we get in his kingdom, we discover his mysteries.[13]

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[10] Ibid. p. 9.
[11] Ibid. p. 9.
[12] Ibid. p. 10.
[13] Ibid. p. 10.

- The seventh song is the Song of the Songs, the end of our spiritual journey, in which we get in the presence of the Bridegroom, in his chamber, face to face. The Song of the Songs expresses how "love" is the end of our spiritual journeys.[14]

Dionysius the Areopagite. Our spiritual journey of the ascent of the soul to the union with God through contemplation

Steven Wlusek describes Dionysius' view of the Neoplatonic journey of the soul's ascent to the union with God through contemplation.

Dionysius connects Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and the yearning for a vision of and union with God as depicted in Moses's episode of the ascent up Mount Sinai.

Dionysius takes the language of darkness, cloud, and silence drawn from Moses's account ascent to meet God on Sinai (Ex 19:20) to provide metaphorical descriptions of attaining the hidden God.

> Moses is the model of the one who 'plunges into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing' (The Mystical Theology 1.3). Moses is revealed to be one who attained the summit (of the mountain and the spiritual journey). However, Moses was not given the gift of the sight of God himself, but was rather given an obscured sense of God's presence through the revelation of the burning bush. Through Moses' faithfulness to this challenge, he was transformed into one whose face shone with the glory of the Lord.[15]

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[14] Ibid. p. 10.

[15] Wlusek, Steven. The foundations of St John of the Cross' spiritual theology in the thought and writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. *Studies in Spirituality* 18, 195-213. doi: 10.2143/SIS.18.0.2033289. 2008. p. 202.

Saint John of the Cross. Our spiritual journey toward love

As described by Dionysius, the love that God has for us initiates a spiritual journey, painful, marked by God's initial absence, which inflames the desire for the love of the soul.

For Steven Wlusek[16], Saint John of the Cross drew upon the writings of both Dionysius and Thomas Aquinas, emphasizing how the creation emanates from and longs for a return to God, initiating our spiritual journey:

> The stark words written on John's map hearken back to the words at the beginning of Dionysius' Mystical Theology. 'By an undivided and absolute abandonment of yourself to everything, shedding all and freed from all, you will be uplifted to the ray of the divine shadow which is above everything that is'. As in Dionysius' allegorical depiction of Moses' arduous climb up the mountain through letting go of all encumbrances, so John's works focus on this necessary abnegation of both material and spiritual attachments for the sake of ascending to union with God. In Book One of The Ascent of Mount Carmel, John stresses: 'The road and ascent to God, then, necessarily demands a habitual effort to renounce and mortify the appetites; the sooner this mortification is achieved, the sooner the soul reaches the top'. As did Dionysius, John emphasized that total renunciation is the pre-condition for transformation by God.[17]

The journey toward love involves an apophatic spirituality:

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[16] Wlusek, Steven. The foundations of St John of the Cross' spiritual theology in the thought and writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. *Studies in Spirituality* 18, 195-213. doi: 10.2143/SIS.18.0.2033289. 2008. p. 202.

[17] Ibid. p. 203.

Elijah was completely spent in every sense of the word before his ascent up the mountainside of Carmel. His very life was in danger due to the threat upon his life by Queen Jezebel, he was exhausted, and was famished. God himself had provided for Elijah's needs, then said: 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by'.

Like Moses, Elijah had divested himself of all encumbrances for the journey; and like Moses, he did not receive a direct revelation of the face of God. God did not present himself to Elijah in wind, earthquake, or fire, but rather in 'the sound of sheer silence' (1 Kgs 19:12).

This image of Elijah's experience of unity with God on the mountain conveys John's central conviction (influenced by Dionysius) that 'the soul must go to God by not comprehending rather than by comprehending, and it must exchange the mutable and comprehensible for the Immutable and Incomprehensible'. The imagery of ascent toward transformation by the transcendent God, which is critical to the spiritual theology of John of the Cross, reveals an obvious influence by the mysticism developed by Dionysius.[18]

Our suffering and vulnerabilities initiate our spiritual journey

The Spiritual Canticle of Saint John of the Cross[19] reflects spiritual experiences that many of us live in our daily realities: the universal intuition of the absence of God from our lives; how can we know spiritual realities if they are invisible, they cannot be perceived by our senses; how can we know God, who is invisible?

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[18] Ibid. pp. 203-204.

[19] John of the Cross. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

> Where have you hidden yourself, and abandoned me to my sorrow, O my Beloved! You have fled like the hart, having wounded me. I ran after You, crying; but You were gone.[20]

This is the core of our existence: an endless journey toward love, the transformation toward God, a union of love, a union of likeness, a union of similitudes, a union of wills, a union of values, a union of beauties, the soul knows the beauty of God and wants to become like him, wants to participate in his perfections, as the poem describes.

The second verse of the Spiritual Canticle responds, employing the metaphor of the intermediaries, the shepherds, as messengers of the emotional effects of God's absence:

> O shepherds, you who go through the sheepcots up the hill, If you shall see Him Whom I love, tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.

Emilio J. Martinez Gonzalez[21] highlights how love is the desire for something that we do not have and makes us "sick, suffer, and die;" only the view of love can heal.

Contemplation leads to discovering the transcendence of reality and its participation in God's transcendence

The next stanza reflects a universal spiritual experience: through meditation and contemplation, the person maintains a dialogue with reality, in which the soul wonders about God:

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Martinez Gonzalez, Emilio J. San Juan de la Cruz, cantor de amores divinos. Revista de Espiritualidad. 67 (2008) 443-465

> In search of my Love, I will go over mountains and strands; I will gather no flowers, I will fear no wild beasts; And pass by the mighty and the frontiers.
> O groves and thickets, Planted by the hand of the Beloved; O verdant meads, Enameled with flowers, Tell me, has He passed by you?[22]

The Spiritual Canticle states how the creatures answer the calls of the soul, expressing some details about God's beauty, goodness, love, transcendence, and how the Creator participates in its perfections on reality:

> A thousand graces diffusing He passed through the groves in haste, and merely regarding them as He passed, clothed them with His beauty.[23]

Our search for God

But the knowledge obtained from creatures, from these messengers, is not enough, is limited, and the soul keeps on seeking direct dialogue with God:

> Oh! who can heal me? Give me perfectly Yourself, send me no more a messenger who cannot tell me what I wish.
>
> All they who serve are telling me of Your unnumbered graces; and all wound me more and more, and something leaves me dying, I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.

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[22] John of the Cross. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom.* Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

[23] Ibid.

Feeling the absence of God can be an engine to feel a thirst for God, a desire to walk in search of God, knowledge, happiness, and a personal search for spiritual realities.

> How do you endure 0 life, not living where you live, and being brought near death by the arrows you receive from that which you conceive of your Beloved?

Discovering God's love

The beauty the creator built are arrows of love sent toward us, hurting us.

> Extinguish these miseries, since no one else can stamp them out; and may my eyes behold you, because you are their light, and I would open them to you alone.
>
> Reveal your presence, and may the vision of your beauty be my death; for the sickness of love is not cured except by your very presence and image.

He has become the light of our eyes; therefore, only his presence can heal our wound of love. The spiritual senses enlighten love, the spiritual sight:

> 0 spring like crystal! If only, on your silvered-over faces, you would suddenly form the eyes I have desired, which I bear sketched deep within my heart.

The spiritual hearing:

> And resounding rivers, the whistling of love-stirring breezes, the tranquil night at the time of the rising dawn, silent music, sounding solitude. By the pleasant lyres and the siren's song.

Nature also speaks of the Lord's love:

> 0 woods and thickets, planted by the hand of my Beloved! 0 green meadow, coated, bright, with flowers, tell me, has he passed by you?
>
> Pouring out a thousand graces, he passed these groves in haste; and having looked at them, with his image alone, clothed them in beauty.
>
> All who are free tell me a thousand graceful things of you; all wound me more
>
> and leave me dying of, ah, I-don't-know-what behind their stammering.
>
> The mountains, and lonely wooded valleys, strange islands, and resounding rivers, the whistling of love-stirring breezes.

The entire reality speaks of the love of God.

Enjoying the loving presence of God

In Saint John of the Cross' Spiritual Canticle, the soul claims God's loving presence:

> Reveal Your presence, And let the vision and Your beauty kill me. Behold the malady Of love is incurable Except in Your presence and before Your face.
>
> O crystal well! O that on Your silvered surface You would mirror forth at once Those desired eyes Which are outlined in my heart.
>
> Turn them away, O my Beloved! I am on the Wing.[24]

[24] John of the Cross. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

After insisting to God on the pain that his absence produces on the soul, God starts presenting himself to the soul:

> Return, My Dove! The wounded hart looms on the hill In the air of your flight and is refreshed.[25]

And now the soul enters deeper contemplation, feeling God's love; as the verses below show, there is no single verb, no actions.

> My Beloved, The mountains, The solitary wooded valleys, The strange islands, The roaring torrents, The whisper of the amorous gales; The tranquil night at the approaches of the dawn, The silent music, The murmuring solitude, The supper which revives, and enkindles love.[26]

Each paragraph reflects what God is to the soul, and how His presence in the creation enkindles his love, as John explains:

> The mountains are high fertile, extensive, beautiful, lovely, flowery, and odorous.
>
> The solitary wooded valleys are tranquil, pleasant, cooling, shady, abounding in sweet waters, and by the variety of trees growing in them, and by the melody of the birds that frequent them, enliven and delight the senses, their solitude and silence procure us a refreshing rest.
>
> The strange islands, distant and unknown to many of us, far beyond the common notions of men, God is called strange by the soul, His ways, judgments, and works are also strange, new, and marvelous to men.
>
> The roaring torrents, the soul is conscious, it feels itself to be so overwhelmed with the torrent of the Spirit of God, fills the

[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

soul with peace and glory, filling the vessels of its humility and the emptiness of its desires, is a spiritual sound and voice overpowering all other sounds and voices in the world.

The whisper of the amorous gales, the most sublime and sweet knowledge of God and of His attributes, the highest delight of which the soul is capable in this life.

The tranquil night at the approaches of the dawn, the soul is in possession and fruition of all the calm, repose, and quiet of a peaceful night, and receives at the same time in God a certain dim, unfathomable divine intelligence.

The silent music, the murmuring solitude, a concert of sublimest melody, it is knowledge tranquil and calm, without audible voice.

The supper which revives, and enkindles love, through this sweet communication he produces recreation, satisfaction, and love.[27]

Living our lives in God's love

After the soul engages in a spiritual marriage with God, the Spiritual Canticle dedicates the last stanzas to describing the profound happiness that the soul experiences, living a life of profound love:

My soul is occupied, And all my substance in His service; Now I guard no flock, Nor have I any other employment: My sole occupation is love.

If, then, on the common land I am no longer seen or found, You will say that I am lost; That, being enamored, I lost myself; and yet was found.

[27] Ibid.

Of emeralds, and of flowers In the early morning gathered, We will make the garlands, Flowering in Your love, And bound together with one hair of my head.

By that one hair You have observed fluttering on my neck, And on my neck regarded, You were captivated; And wounded by one of my eyes.

When You regarded me, Your eyes imprinted in me Your grace: For this You loved me again, And thereby my eyes merited To adore what in You they saw.

Despise me not, For if I was swarthy once You can regard me now; Since You have regarded me, Grace and beauty have You given me.

God describes the fulfillment of all desires of the soul, living a life of contemplative love:

The little white dove Has returned to the ark with the bough; And now the turtle-dove Its desired mate On the green banks has found.

In solitude she lived, And in solitude built her nest; And in solitude, alone Has the Beloved guided her, In solitude also wounded with love.

The soul expresses such happiness in love:

Let us rejoice, O my Beloved! Let us go forth to see ourselves in Your beauty, To the mountain and the hill, Where the pure water flows: Let us enter into the heart of the thicket.

We shall go at once To the deep caverns of the rock Which are all secret, There we shall enter in And taste of the new wine of the pomegranate.

The last stanza concludes:

> None saw it; Neither did Aminadab appear The siege was intermitted, And the cavalry dismounted At the sight of the waters.

The complete abandonment in God's love.

As Miroslaw Kiwka states[28] for Saint John, a man reaches his perfection and fullness only in his total adherence to God through love:

> "The purpose of the soul is to love," "In the evening you will be tested in love; learn to love as God wants to be loved." Loving is our core competence. "God communicates to the soul with so much true love, that there is no love of a mother that so tenderly caresses her son, nor love of a brother, nor friendship of a friend, that can be compared to him. For the tenderness and love with which the immense Father gives and magnifies this humble and loving soul, as if he were her servant and she were his master."

In his poem "Flame of living love," John states:

> O flame of living love, that you tenderly hurt of my soul in the deepest center! Well, you're not elusive anymore, Finish it if you want; tear the fabric of this sweet encounter![29]

God's love for us precedes our love for God, and His love initiates a spiritual journey of the soul toward the encounter with love.

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[28] Kiwka, Miroslaw. Man and Love in Saint John of the Cross: Excerpt from the Doctoral Thesis presented at the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Navarra. Pamplona. 1995. pp 20, 22

[29] John of the Cross. Flame of living love https://www.discerninghearts.com/catholic-podcasts/st-john-of-the-cross/

This is the core of how spirituality enlightens our existence: an endless journey toward love, a transformation toward union with God, a union of love, a union of likeness, a union of similitudes, a union of wills, a union of values, a union of beauties, the soul knows the beauty of God and wants to become like him, wants to participate in his perfections, as the poem describes:

> Now I occupy my soul and all my energy in his service; I no longer tend the herd, nor have I any other work now that my every act is love.[30]

Thomas Merton. Contemplation as a spiritual journey toward the presence of God

Ross Labrie[31] explains how Thomas Merton viewed contemplation as a journey similar to the one exercised by an artist, a philosopher, a poet; contemplation leads to a journey of relaxed openness, the consciousness of the presence of God in the beauty and goodness of reality:

> There were later moments in his experience, particularly as recorded in his journals, which point to his encounter with the transcendental, especially on his trip to the Himalayas and to Sri Lanka. There seems little doubt that Merton experienced an epiphany in looking at the great stone Buddhas in Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka: "I don't know when in my life, I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination."

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Labrie, Ross. Contemplation and Action in Thomas Merton. *Christianity and Literature* Vol 55, No. 4 (Summer 2006)

> What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in the forests, at night, cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself all over the bridges, and the talk of the water courses everywhere in the hollows! Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants, this rain. As long as it talks I am going to listen.[32]

[32] Merton, Thomas. *Rain and the Rhinoceros*. Essay. http://piefurcation.blogspot.com/2006/04/rain-and-rhinoceros-by-thomas-merton.html

III.

SPIRITUALITY CONNECTS US INTERNALLY AND WITH OTHERS, DISCOVERING TRANSCENDENCE AND LOVE IN US AND OTHERS, BUILDING VALUES

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the third dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: the capacity to build consciousness, connectedness with our inner self and with others, discovering our beauty, goodness, truth, our value, and the value of others, building higher values, building love. Connectedness, values, and love are extraordinary sources of happiness and greatness, leading to world peace.

This chapter is crucial to understand how our values, which are part of our spirituality, greatness, and leadership, have a critical role in the political economy. Individualism and collectivism impact on the political economies of the right and left, which have a limited capacity to promote greatness and leadership.

Instead, the values that emerge from our spirituality build our greatness and leadership, maximizing human, social, renewal and process capital, promoting economic growth and social justice.

World peace results from our conscience, connecting us with our inner self and others, discovering the value of self and others, building higher values, reintegrating spirituality, psychology, and morality, building affections, building trust, reducing cultural opposites, and promoting social harmony.

Summary of the chapter

Any person can experience how our consciousness helps us be connected with reality, our inner selves, and others. Any person can experience the role of consciousness to have a whole life: we educate our children to exercise their consciousness to live a life of integrity.

Consciousness and connectedness lead to discovering that we all have transcendence, we are valuable.

For Max Scheler, consciousness leads to connecting a person internally and to the external reality discovering values, building values based on love and sympathy, the human heart, promoting greatness. Values and value ranks promote greatness, recognizing spiritual values (justice, rights, aesthetics, values of beauty, goodness, and truth) as the highest values, promoting greatness and leading to peace and harmony.

For Martin Buber, our spirituality helps to connect with the other: human relationships are manifestations of spirituality.

For Martin Heidegger, we are members of a human community, sharing experiences, impacting each other, a society in dialogue.

For Dietrich Von Hildebrand, our spirituality connects with the heart, the voice of the personal soul, the root of all affectivity, and empathy; values are the unifying force that builds communities.

For Edith Stein, our spirituality promotes empathy and builds community.

For Hannah Arendt, our consciousness leads to social integration and human relationships toward world peace.

For Emanuel Levinas, our consciousness, the human face, and expression lead to encounters; ethics is based on relationships and sensibility.

For Karol Wojtyla, everyday life spirituality leads to discovering the person's value and the primacy of love.

For Louis Bouyer, consciousness and values reintegrate spirituality, psychology, affections, and religiosity, crucial to promoting

happiness, emotional health, social integration, social harmony, and personal and social transformation.

For Etcheverry Boneo, values are transformational: values create in us a desire to act, arouse in us a specific emotion, a particular affection, an attitude, transforming us and our behaviors; values transform cultures, build communities, values transform relationships and reality. Values transform our affections, attitudes, behaviors, ways we relate to others, and the world, transforming reality and impacting persons and communities' lives. Values become part of ourselves and transform us as persons, communities, worldviews, and psycho-ethical structures.

Spiritual traditions promote connectedness, social integration, love, and connecting a person internally and to others; Eastern religions promote mindfulness, leading to richer perceptions, human integration, and love.

The religions of the Bible promote the value and love of God, the person, and the community.

When Jacob was in the wilderness suffering his isolation, when Isaiah was in the cave depressed, when Job was devastated by the turmoil in his life, when Tobit suffered in his journey, when Jeremiah lamented his fate; these experiences led to connectedness, to connect the persons internally and with God; these experiences led to connect spirituality, psychology, emotions and relate to others.

The Psalms express different realities of the soul, in which spirituality, psychology, affections, and religiosity are interconnected.

The New Testament promotes connectedness: God is love, God loves us, and we must love one another. For the fathers of the Desert, through contemplation, we climb toward God as the source of love.

Saint Bernard considered the monastery a school of love: the loving embrace between the soul and God is the only true satisfaction in this life. Saint Thomas Aquinas considered contemplation the core of beatitude, friendship, and love: the perfection of the spiritual

life is found in love. Thomas Merton considered that contemplation leads to discovering love and building love. Modern spirituality produces a sense of fullness, of living life correctly, leading to happiness.

Saint John of the Cross' poem "The Dark night" ("One dark night, fired with love's urgent longings, ah, the sheer grace"), and the "Spiritual Canticle" ("Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me moaning"), express an emotional and spiritual journey.

We often practice spirituality to "seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:15): this desire is spiritual and psychological. Spirituality, psychology, affections, and morality are interconnected.

Spiritual traditions promote social integration, love, connecting a person internally and to others

Harald Walach[1] discusses how spiritual traditions promote social integration. Our inner connectedness leads us to realize that our happiness and well-being depend on our connection with others and with the environment; spirituality drives us to be part of the community:

> The inner experience of connectedness leads to the insight that our own well-being is in a very deep sense the same as that of our environment and fellow human beings. And this inner experience is not only intellectual but also emotional and motivational, which means that it is an impulse to action. In other words, the experience of connectedness results in the insight that there is no person happiness without common welfare; no self-actualization without regarding the benefit of others; no self-development at the expense of the environment or the surroundings. Thus, the spiritual experience introduces an element that

[1] Walach, Harald. "Reconciling spirituality and science in the twenty-first century. Elements for a World View Incorporating Spiritual and Scientific Insights." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 294.

> cannot be found in the mental insight of connectedness alone. The basic experience of connectedness, then, I claim, is the basis for all spiritual traditions.[2]

Stuart Rose[3] investigated the meaning of spirituality among people of different cultures and reached enlightening insights. People's understanding of spirituality is linked with internal and external connectedness, our self, personal awareness, others, and the Divine. Love is a critical part of spirituality:

> Spirituality can be experienced in the wonder of nature, in joy and the arts, in humanism, football, the funeral of Princess Diana, mutual tolerance for all living things, in acts of complete selflessness, and in service.[4]

Eastern religions promote mindfulness, leading to human integration and love

Hindu spirituality promotes meditation, mindfulness, introspection, and concentration. They foster wholeness and integration, and personal and community healing. This produces stillness, peace, equanimity, happiness, harmony, purification, development of the inner self, a reflective consciousness, personal liberation from samsara (death and rebirth), and the law of karma (personal destiny depends on one's previous actions).

As Krishna Sivaraman[5] explains, those who live their lives in the 'world', attached to it, engulfed in the world, in egoism, generated

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[2] Ibid. p. 294.

[3] Rose, Stuart. "Is the Term 'Spirituality' a Word that Everyone Uses, But Nobody Knows What Anyone Means by it?" *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 16, No. 2. 2001. p. 198.

[4] Ibid. p. 202.

[5] Sivaraman, Krishna. *Hindu Spirituality*. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Delhi. India. 1989.

and reared by the ego, personal and corporate, appropriated and owned as 'mine', asserting the 'I against you', inhibit the expression of spirit. On the contrary, 'worldlessness' is a disposition to live in the world as a means for something higher, spiritual, and aware of all beings' values and our relationship with them. Being connected with others, we are all connected through our true selves.

> The story of the spiritual wisdom of India is the story of the concerted effort to contain the power and pretensions of the egoistic or self-asserting will. Through a discipline of mind and reason, through heart and love, and through will and power, accomplish an enhancement or exaltation of life.[6]

Buddhist spirituality promotes meditation, and mindfulness. They lead to richer perceptions, discovering the individual's true self, others' discovery, connecting with each person, and the universe. Non-attachment reduces suffering and promotes a right view, intention, speech, morality, livelihood with mindfulness and compassion, no passions, and wisdom. Meditation leads to love, compassion, friendship, and justice.

Daoism invites to connect each person internally, persons among themselves, and the universe. This leads to harmony, integration, cooperation, and peace, participating in a higher reality, reducing the ego and placing the person as part of the community, of the universe, a natural change, a transformation of life, life and death, joy and sorrow, the person needs to be at peace with that natural way.

Confucius promoted a morality based on personal integrity, nobleman, hard work, social integration, compassion, reciprocity, and empathy, leading to love and care of parents, children, friends, neighbors, and the village of all humanity.

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[6] Ibid. pp vxv-xviii

The religions of the Bible promote the value and love of God, the person, and the community

Judeo-Christian spirituality promotes a relationship and love of God, love of self, and love of others.

The Bible promotes greatness, love, compassion, the dignity of the person, and the value of the community: "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God; To comfort all who mourn" (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18).

The 10 Commandments promote right actions that defend the value of the person and the community, leading to salvation and reward; wrong actions lead to damnation and punishment.

The Beatitudes promote spirituality, love, compassion, humility, meekness, cleanness of heart, peacemaking, righteousness, leading to happiness and greatness.

Islamic spirituality, often called Sufism, is a mystical attitude of Islam based on a personal experience with God, looking for more profound knowledge and love in his presence. Sufis work to purify their hearts from worldly attachments. It requires abandoning personal will, in complete trust in God, deepening a personal intimacy with God, and getting rid of egoism.

In the New Testament, God is love, God loves us, we must love one another

Saint John presents how God is love and how He loves us:

- John 3:35-36. The Father loveth the Son: and he hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth in the Son, hath

life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

- John 15:9. As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love.
- John 13:34-35. A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.
- John 5:20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things which himself doth: and greater works than these will he shew him, that you may wonder.
- John 17:24-26. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; that they may see my glory which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world. Just Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee: and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have made known thy name to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

This love leads us to love one another:

- 1 John 4:7-12, 20-21. Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God. And every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is charity. By this hath the charity of God appeared toward us, because God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. My dearest, if God hath so loved us; we also ought to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abideth in us, and his charity is perfected

> in us. If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother.

For Saint Paul, love plays a unique role in our existence; love is above everything in our lives:

> 1 Corinthians 13:1-5. If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; Is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil.

The Fathers: through contemplation, we climb toward God as the source of Love

Von Balthasar[7] stresses the aesthetic transcendence of Dionysius' apophatic spirituality. Through contemplation, we climb toward God as the source of Love.

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[7] Von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *Glory of the Lord. A theological aesthetics*. Translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis. Edited by Joseph Fessio, S.J., and John Riches. Ignatius Press. San Francisco. Crossroad Publications. New York. p. 154.

As McGinn[8] describes, Saint Ambrose, with a strong influence from Platonists and Neoplatonists, described the soul's descent from its original home and return through contemplation and purification. Based on the Song of the Songs:

> The soul that cleaves to God entered into the garden of the mind, in which there were an abundance of various virtues and the choicest discourses […] the soul is united to God in a bond of lawful matrimony, the passive soul and the active Divine Lover; this reflects the "necessity for interiorization, the ascent of the soul, mystical intoxication, and the divine birth of the soul […] moral purification under the Word's inspiration was meant to lead to forms of personal and immediate contact with the Divine Lover […] The experience of presence followed by an absence that increases the soul desire and the resolution to purify herself through virtuous practices."[9]

McGinn states how for Augustine, "all theological effort was essentially directed to increasing our love for God […] the conviction that surpasses all human knowing and therefore can only be attained by love."[10]

[8] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. p. 126.

[9] Ibid. p. 126.

[10] Ibid. p. 154.

Saint Bernard. The monastery as a school of love, the loving embrace between the soul and God, is the only true satisfaction to be found in this life

According to McGinn, when Saint Bernard established his first monastery, his goal was to "create a school of love."[11] He believed that "only love could attain God in this life; knowledge cannot."[12]

According to McGinn, for Bernard, the experience of love is superior to acquiring knowledge: "Instruction makes us learned; experience makes us wise."[13]

According to McGinn, Bernard states that among God's attributes:

> Length is his eternity; his breadth the love that surpasses not only every affection but also all knowledge; his height is his power, his depth his wisdom; the greatest of this is charity.[14]
>
> Gregory the Great reinforced: "Love itself is a [form of] knowing."[15]

According to McGinn[16] in the eighty-four Sermons of the "Song of the Songs," Bernard explains the love between God, the Divine Bridegroom, and the bride, symbolizing the church or the individual. There are four kisses between God and us: a kiss to the just souls of the Old Testament, the kiss of the incarnation, kissing us to convert us to lead us to the union with God, and a kiss in the future eschatology.[17] Bernard describes four stages of our love. The first: God is the reason for loving God; He provides the occasion; He creates the

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[11] Ibid. p. 162.
[12] Ibid. p. 202.
[13] Ibid. p. 155
[14] Ibid. pp. 193-194
[15] Ibid. p. 155
[16] Ibid. p. 165
[17] Ibid. p. 166

affection; He consummates the desire. The second: we love God for what He has done for us; we love him for our own sake, our own need. The third: while we progress in the second stage, we gradually pay attention to God, thinking, reading, praying, obeying, and forming a deeper relationship with God. The fourth is loving God for God's sake, which is probably impossible in this life.[18]

According to McGinn,[19] Bernard describes the bridal love, the pure, disinterested, and total character of her affection, full of sweetness or purity, wisdom or prudence, strength or impetuosity, completely mutual, the highest form of vision, or contemplation of God, and the most exalted type of union.

> God is not loved without a reward even if he is to be loved without thought of reward […] Love must be its own reward, its own merit […] Love has no cause or fruit beyond itself: its fruit is its use. I love because I love. I love that I may love […] Love is the ultimate enjoyment of the bride, her truest sweetness.[20]

As McGinn states, for Bernard, the loving embrace between the soul and God is the only true satisfaction to be found in this life.[21] To the question addressed to Saint Peter, "do you love me," William of Saint Thierry responds: "You know that I want to love you," expressing his longing, his will to love: "I set up the ascending steps in my heart. First, a great will seems necessary; then an illuminated will; and finally an affected will, or loving will."[22]

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[18] Ibid. p. 196
[19] Ibid. p. 198
[20] Ibid. p. 199
[21] Ibid. p. 216
[22] Ibid. p. 252

Saint Thomas Aquinas. Contemplation as the core of beatitude, friendship, and love

According to Jean-Pierre Torrell,[23] for Saint Thomas, contemplation is in the core of beatitude, the end of theology, the beatitude of the pure of heart, for they shall see God, and as Saint John states: "This is eternal life, that they know you." Contemplation becomes a fundamental life value because it brings to fulfillment of our entire being. At the core of our happiness, we are at its root: love is the end of contemplation, achieved in affectivity, toward the growth of love and good works.

As Torrell explains, Thomas defines charity as a friendship between God and human beings. On this basis, it is a friendship between human persons themselves; friendship carries the desire of friends to be with one another in an enduring way. But not any love merits the name of friendship: it must be a love of benevolence, love by which we want the good for the beloved. Then, when the other reciprocates this same benevolence toward me, a community is built. Communities of friendship can be founded on interest, pleasure, or virtue; the latter can be more profound and more durable.

According to Torrell, Thomas views friendship as based on the good that friends have in common: family, communities such as national, local, cultural, or athletic. Among them, contemplation plays a central role as the road to friendship:

> Thomas rightly assigns to contemplation a special place in the itinerary that leads a friend toward his Friend. If the fundamental desire of friends is that they live together, then the contemplative life manifests itself as an anticipation here below of the intimacy that will only be perfect in beatitude.

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[23] Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

> It is proper to friendship that one take delight in a friend's presence, rejoice in the other's words and deeds, and find in one's friend consolation for all anxieties; and so it is especially in our sorrows that we hasten to our friends for consolation. Similarly, too, it is proper to friendship to consent to a friend in what he or she wills.[24]

These reflections place contemplation as the core of beatitude, friendship, and love.

The perfection of the spiritual life is found in love

Thomas wrote a treatise "*On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life*," in which he stated that:

> The perfection of the spiritual life simply speaking is found according to charity. Spiritual life consists primarily in charity, and he who does not have charity, he is regarded as spiritually nothing.
>
> Hence the Apostle "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2).
>
> Blessed John the Apostle also declares that the whole of spiritual life consists in love, saying, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death" (1 John 3:14).
>
> Therefore, it is he who is perfect in charity who is simply speaking perfect in the spiritual life. But some can be called perfect in a certain respect, as regards anything connected with the spiritual life.

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[24] Ibid. pp 62-63

> This can also be clearly shown from the words of Holy Scripture.
>
> For the Apostle in Col 3:14 attributes perfection primarily to charity: for having enumerated many virtues, such as compassion, benignity, and humility, he adds, "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Col 3:14).
>
> But some are also said to be perfect as regards understanding; for the same Apostle says, "Be babes in evil, but in sense be perfect." (1 Cor 14:20).
>
> Elsewhere in the same epistle, he says, "be perfect in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10), although as was said, no matter how perfect knowledge a man has, without charity he is to be judged as nothing.[25]

Walter Principe[26] completes Thomas' views on spirituality as an activity of the human soul that involves the entire person; it leads to value the creation while introducing the person into God's reality. This helps to understand Thomas' insights: perceiving a spiritual reality leads to love.

Thomas Merton. Contemplation leads to discovering love to build love

Contemplation leads us to discover values, a practical and experiential capacity to find the meaning and value of reality, and together with that, to build love, the primary purpose of contemplation:

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[25] Thomas Aquinas. *On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life*. https://www.pathsoflove.com/aquinas/perfection-of-the-spiritual-life.html.

[26] Principe, Walter. *Aquinas' Spirituality for Christ's Faithful Living in the World*. Presentation at Aquinas Institute of Theology. 1992. St. Louis, Missouri.

> Walking down a street, sweeping a floor, washing dishes, hoeing beans, reading a book, taking a stroll in the woods, all can be enriched with contemplation and with the obscure sense of the presence of God. Such "walking with God" is one of the simplest and most secure ways of living a life of prayer, and one of the safest.[27]
>
> The lower and more elementary mystical intuitions are those which are informed by and rely on symbols taken from the material world. The higher and more perfect contemplation goes beyond sense imagery and discursive understanding, and flashes out in the darkness of "unknowing."[28]

Modern spirituality produces a sense of fullness, of living life correctly, leading to happiness

Spiritual values are the response to centuries of promoting a secular society.

André van der Braak[29] responds in consonance with Charles Taylor, explaining what secular society is:

> For some people, 'secularity' refers to the retreat of religion from public spaces. For others, perhaps most people, the term refers to the falling off of religious belief and practice, especially in Western Europe. Taylor distinguishes, however, a third meaning. Secularity refers, in this perspective, to 'a move from a society

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[27] Merton, Thomas. *The Inner Experience: Kinds of Contemplation (IV)*. Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust.

[28] Merton, Thomas. *The Inner Experience: Infused Contemplation (V)*. Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust.

[29] van der Braak, André. "Zen spirituality in a secular age. Charles Taylor and Zen Buddhism in the West." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2008. Leuven. Belgium.

where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is to be understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace'. Belief in God is no longer axiomatic; there are alternatives.[30]

Secularity arose out of a newly invented and constructed self-understanding. Taylor stresses that such a self-understanding is not a theory about ourselves but a lived understanding.

The new self-understanding during the Enlightenment course proved to be reason, allowing us a view of the whole, science could now pursue objective truths with universal validity.

As a second development, through the practice of introspection, a rich vocabulary of interiority developed. Man conceived of himself as having inner depths. The spiritual life became a matter of accessing those inner depths.

A third development was that in Western societies, a culture of 'authenticity' or expressive individualism arose. The individuality that already characterized modernity has shifted into a widespread expressive individualism. Each one of us has his or her own way of realizing our humanity, and it is important to find and live out one's own. Many forms of therapy encourage their clients to find themselves, realize their true self.

In the context of expressive individualism, it is not necessary to embed our search for the sacred in any broader religious framework. One can only connect with the sacred through passion and deeply felt personal insight. The spiritual path becomes a personal search.[31]

Secularity impacts society:

This type of secularity has a major impact on spirituality. It affects 'the whole context of understanding in which our moral,

[30] Ibid. p. 4.
[31] Ibid. pp. 6, 7, 44.

> spiritual or religious experience and search takes place, (...) the implicit, largely unfocused background of this experience and search'.[32]

The exhaustion of a secular society invites many to revalue spiritual values, the highest rank of Scheler values.

According to van der Braak[33], spirituality produces a sense of fullness, of living life correctly, which a relationship with God can reach.

David Tacey[34] provides an excellent explanation for why today's society shows a renewed interest in spirituality as a result of the failure of a secular society to promote happiness:

> Why are the waters of spirituality flooding their banks now? It could be that our religious substitutes and our false gods are failing us. The secular society worshipped reason and enshrined logic and science. It proclaimed that rationality would deliver us from the superstitions of religion and liberate us from mythological thinking. Science, logic, and reason (logos) would eradicate the old gods (mythos) and create a brave new world, where we would feel free and satisfied.
>
> But what happened? We became free of religion, but we did not feel freer. Instead, we masked our spiritual urges and gave them new names, and new social and political outlets. A host of liberation ideologies, beginning with the natural sciences, progressive economics, and Marxian communism, were invented to cure our ills and overcome our afflictions. For a while, we told ourselves that these ideologies would work, that they simply

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[32] Ibid. p. 4.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Tacey, David. "Rising waters of the spirit. The View from Secular Society." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium.

needed more time and a better chance to prove themselves. Politics would deliver liberation to the people, and economics would bring about a better world. Science and reason would triumph over unreason, and utopia was to be discerned just a little way ahead.

Our liberation ideologies did not set us free, but just produced monsters.

Socialism produced totalitarian fascism, repression, subjugation, mass murder and tyranny. Western liberalism produced gigantic industries, globalization, terrifying levels of consumerism, social exploitation, pollution, and the desecration of the environment.

Our various forms of cultural materialism were meant to deliver a better and more humane world, but instead we fell victim to new kinds of enslavement and oppression, and as in days of old, giants (in the form of monstrous corporations) continued to stalk the earth.

Today we are asking if we need to turn beyond the human to discover a more humane world. Paradoxically, it may be the extra-human and the spiritual that delivers the liberation and justice that we seek. We might need to draw from the transcendental and its lofty ideals, so that we can become more fully human. Certainly, it has become increasingly difficult for people to 'believe' in politics, science, or humanism. We know that the promises they make are inadequate, that they cannot be trusted, that they fall prey to corruption, and that we can no more invest our hopes and dreams in utopian political programs.[35]

Spirituality is a powerful engine of greatness in the Bible: spirituality promotes virtues, faith, love, strength, and wisdom to endure suffering.

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[35] Tacey, David. "Rising waters of the spirit. The View from Secular Society." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 8.

Rahner refers to the "mysticism of everyday life, the discovery of God in all things," even for "anonymous Christians," in his views: people that ignore the Christian scriptures but live a life according to Christian beliefs.

Max Scheler. Consciousness leads to discovering values

Max Scheler relied on phenomenology to explain how consciousness leads to discovering values.

Max Scheler[36] considered phenomenology an "attitude of spiritual seeing [...] something which otherwise remains hidden."[37] Such an attitude opens the possibility of knowing the essence of reality, discovering its value, and generating love, a spiritual feeling, the highest possible value.

Contemplation plays a pivotal role in Scheler:

> Only by adopting the standpoint and attitude of an onlooker praising or blaming his conduct, and thus ultimately contemplating himself through the eyes of an 'impartial spectator', and by participating directly, through fellow-feeling, in the hatred, anger, indignation: and impulses of revenge which the latter directs toward him, does there arise in him also a tendency to self-judgement either positive or negative.[38]
>
> The dreamy state of a woman absorbed in contemplation of her present and future role as a mother is just such a state of

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[36] Scheler, Max. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism.* Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Northwestern University Press. 1973. Illinois.

[37] Scheler, Max. *Phenomenology and the Theory of Cognition*. Selected Philosophical Essays. Northwestern University Press. 1973. Illinois. p. 137.

[38] Scheler, Max. *The nature of sympathy*. Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group. 2008. London, New York. p. 6.

> kinesthetic ecstasy, as it were, in which the presence of the child-to-be is disclosed to her.[39]
>
> Fellow-feeling can only effect this if its intention is directed upon the essence of the other person's ego (including its value-essence and the elements which make it up); of which it is no less capable than intuition, in the discernment of essences, or thought, in the contemplation of ideas.[40]

Consciousness connects a person internally and to the external reality

Max Scheler states that values do not exist in things but in phenomena and the feelings they generate in the subject:

> Values are given to intentional feelings in relational to an object, which generates love, interest, attraction, or the opposite. In a person's relational life, values emerge, in a positive or negative way, as something that exists in a person, not in the objects. Agreeable, lovely, charming, are accessible to us without being attached or associated to any object. I can value a friend even if he is not acting as a friend.[41]

Phenomenology's "intentionality" of consciousness produced a revolution: consciousness is not a way to isolate a person; on the contrary, it is a powerful way to connect a person with her and his internal reality and to the external reality; intentionality generates a

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[39] Ibid. p. 27.

[40] Ibid. p. 60.

[41] Scheler, Max. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism.* Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Northwestern University Press. 1973. Illinois. p. 625.

reference to something transcending the person, connecting a person to the world, to others. This way, the soul, psychology, spirituality, and relationality are connected.

The human heart builds values based on love and sympathy

The act of valuing is done by the human "heart," the seat of love, the center of the person; the essence of human nature is not its reason or thinking but its loving and sympathy.

> Until recent times philosophy was inclined to a prejudice that has its historical origin in antiquity. This prejudice consists in upholding the division between "reason" and "sensibility," which is completely inadequate in terms of the structure of the spiritual. This division demands that we assign everything that is not rational – that is not order, law, and the like – to sensibility. Thus our whole emotional life – and, for most modern philosophers, our conative life as well, even love and hate – must be assigned to "sensibility." According to this division, everything, in the mind which is alogical, e.g., intuition, feeling, striving, loving, hating, is dependent on man's psychophysical organization.[42]

The relational dimension of values

The centrality of Scheler's "values" is the "relational" dimension that it generates.

The person who belongs to a community expresses shared feelings, from the most superficial, psychic contagion to a more profound love and solidarity.

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[42] Ibid. p. 286.

Values foster the "relational" dimension. They arise from the interaction between objects and subjects, producing a feeling. Thus, values emerge from a relationship between the subject and reality.

Both individualism and collectivism disregard the relational aspect; we look at other persons and objects, enriching everyone's lives.

Values promote greatness, leading to happiness

Values promote greatness, leading to happiness: values help to discover and value what is good, beautiful, and true, to have the ability to feel admiration and love for the creation; they help to live in the present, turn away from negatives thoughts about the past, or anxiety about the future missing the beauty of the present time; peace and harmony lead to happiness.

Values help to discover the value of the individual: our true self, our identity, and our value as a person and community; values help to develop our personalities, to build self-esteem, and our ability to be in touch with personal limitations humbly and honestly.

Values help to discover the value of the community, to develop relationality, affection, love; values help to develop community-oriented virtues and behaviors such as generosity, kindness, compassion, tenderness, reconciliation, willingness to help others, to give them freedom, to be open to receive their affection, caring for the weaker, the sick, the vulnerable, even choosing careers to dedicate a complete life to help the community, the vulnerable; our happiness is not complete if we do not incorporate others' happiness, creating social order.

Values are engines of transformation, as they promote greatness, transcendence, morality, positive attitudes, motivation, energy, discernment, maturity, emotions, relations, communication, dialogue, social inclusion, cooperation, love, compassion, solidarity, which maximize happiness.

Value ranks promote greatness, leading us to happiness

Value ranks are crucial to help us to make decisions that lead to happiness.

Plato established some general value ranks: greatness, justice, goodness, beauty, and holiness as the highest values.

Aristotle considered that higher values were those oriented to develop virtues, which impact more people's happiness: the happiness of all humankind is above the happiness of a nation. The latter is above the happiness of one individual.

Building value ranks based on knowledge and feelings

Max Scheler[43] and Nicolai Hartmann[44] provided relevant insights related to value ranks.

The value ranks are possible because a person can know the essences and identify them as valuable, good, and lovable; a person may love some more than others, creating an order of love, love this more than that.

Every person has a different order of love; personal orders of love change throughout lives, leading to significant distortions based on personal emotional issues, such as resentment.

The structure of our order of love defines who we are, what we want, whom we want to become, what makes us happy, our vocation, and the meaning of our lives.

This reflects a vertical dimension: some values rank higher than others.

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[43] Scheler, Max. *The nature of sympathy*. Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group. 2008. London, New York.

Scheler, Max. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism.* Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Northwestern University Press. 1973. Illinois

[44] Hartmann, Nicolai. *Ethics*. Routledge. 2002. New York.

For each rank of values, there is a horizontal dimension. For example, in the highest rank, one might have a conflict of values among the same rank: what is more important to be truthful or to save a life if a Nazi soldier knocks on our door and we need to lie to save a Jewish family hidden in the house.

Scheler's value rank: spiritual values are the highest values and promote greatness

Scheler established a rank among values, a hierarchy among them, based on the feelings that generated such values.[45]

Scheler's value ranks provide criteria to make decisions, emphasizing spiritual values (justice, right, beauty, knowledge and truth, religious beliefs). They positively impact the community, promoting sympathy, relationships, communication, dialogue, love, and compassion.

The ranking considers different aspects: 1. Durability (higher ranking values feelings last more), 2. Extension and indivisibility (higher ranking values are broader and more integrated), 3. They produce more profound satisfaction with positive side effects, 4. Whether the values help to integrate the society, 5. Lower rank values are oriented toward physical matters subject to utilitarian ethics, while higher value ranks toward spiritual.

Spiritual values are based on the feelings of the personality, religious values of the holy or unholy, or moral values such as justice/injustice, right and wrong, aesthetic values of beauty and ugliness, values of knowledge and truth, belief, unbelief, awe, humility, repentance, worship. Appear on absolute objects. Generate feelings of bliss, and despair.

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[45] Scheler, Max. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism.* Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Northwestern University Press. 1973. Illinois. pp. 86-100.

People would be willing to give their own lives to defend these values because they have unity: justice, truth, and beauty may reflect different dimensions of the same reality.

Nicolai Hartmann also states that a new world requires spiritual values: "Only a sense of justice which is at the same time loving, only a brotherly love which also considers the far distant, only pride which would likewise be humble, could be valid as an ideal for moral conduct."[46]

Etcheverry Boneo. Values transform us and our behaviors

According to Luis Maria Etcheverry Boneo,[47] value is every object whose contact produces some modification in a person's being and operation. A value is an object, real or not, capable of activating an individual faculty, a person, or a community and modifying it stably. Every object whose contact produces some modification in a person or human community is valuable in its being and functioning. If an object, thought, seen, imagined, dreamed, remembered, touched, or eaten, changes me, even minimally in my way of thinking, feeling, judging, acting, my psycho-ethical structure, and my emotions, that is a value.

According to Etcheverry Boneo, values are based on knowledge. A piece of knowledge produces value if it can reach my mind and leave in it some modification, change my valuation of things, affections, emotions, and desire to act. An idea generates an aesthetic impression, a sensation, an image, a memory, or a physical impact, which takes me on a different path than the one I had before and in my way of being and acting.

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[46] Hartmann, Nicolai. *Ethics*. Routledge. 2002. New York. p. 425

[47] Etcheverry Boneo, Luís María. *Christianity and today's worldview. Knowledge, judgment, assessment and action*. Conference. Buenos Aires. Argentina. 1969

Value is an object, an idea, a thought, an aesthetic impression, a sensation, an image, a memory, a physical strike, seen, imagined, dreamed, remembered, touched, or eaten, that changes us, our way of thinking, of wanting, of feeling, in our personal psycho-ethical structure, of getting excited, of judging, of acting.

At a given moment, two objects collide; we like one more than the other, and that experience is repeated on and on. From that relation, from that set of relations, a structure is made, and we realize our preferences, convergences, and associations.

A value is incorporated into our structure so that tomorrow we can differentiate ourselves from what we were yesterday, as persons, as communities, our worldview, and our psycho-ethical structure.

These values suggest a desire to act and arouse a specific emotion, affection, or attitude in us.

All of this creates and causes a series of circuits in us that are set in motion by stable links between these diverse values established within us.

Values transform relationships and reality

According to Etcheverry Boneo, values not only transform our inner way of being, but they also transform the ways we relate to people and things, the ways we transform the reality, transforming a wasteland into an orchard, making a mountain disappear, creating an artificial lake, making forests disappear, making cities grow.

And those changes impact the lives of persons and communities.

Cultures lead to unity and harmony or disintegration and collapse

According to Etcheverry Boneo, culture is a structured set of values that informs the faculties of a subject and modifies them in their way of being and operating.

Culture is a set of values that affect a person and a community, that modify it with stability and permanence, and its way of being and operating. Culture is that set of values that emerge and leave their mark and the structure that links those values together.

Culture is a set of values and the structure that links them together in a person and community. The structure of those values refers to the relationships among values, their coordination, and subordination.

These values have relationships among themselves; our psychology and ethics structure them and define preferences, hierarchies, ranks, convergences, or clashes. This structure can reflect a healthy or sick culture, leading to personal and community unity, fragmentation, destruction, anarchy, and dissolution.

Persons with a common culture build community. As Etcheverry Boneo states,[48] a civilization is the external expression of a culture.

Civilization is a set of uses, customs, social functions, and stable relationships with other people, with things that occur at a given time, in a community, a people, or a nation.

Each community member relates to others and creates a society, and together they operate on the environment, build resources, make decisions, transform reality, and generate social results.

Realism transforms cultures promoting social harmony

According to Geert Hofstede,[49] the prestigious expert in cultures and organizations, we all carry a "software of the mind," what we call "culture," which is formed on values.

As Hofstede explains, values deal with pairings such as individualism versus collectivism, high versus low power distance, masculin-

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Hofstede, Geert; Hofstede, Gert Jan. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill Education. 2010. New York. p. 4.

ity versus femininity, high versus low uncertainty avoidance, evil versus good, dirty versus clean, dangerous versus safe, forbidden versus permitted, decent versus indecent, moral versus immoral, ugly versus beautiful, unnatural versus natural, abnormal versus normal, paradoxical versus logical, and irrational versus rational.[50]

A realist epistemology provides a solution to the bipolarity of cultural values.

A realist epistemology involves spirituality, which promotes humanism, social integration, and social harmony, reducing cultural bipolarity:

- Knowledge and wisdom (chapter 1) that rely on consciousness, meditation, contemplation, connecting with others, understanding them, and generating feelings, emotions, and empathy, reduce cultural bipolarity.
- Our capacity to live our life as a journey to appreciate and create transcendence (chapter 2) towards beauty, goodness, truth, and to love reduce cultural bipolarity.
- Our connectedness, internally and with others, building personal and social integration, values, and love, reduce cultural bipolarity.
- Our connection with God, experiencing his loving presence and building our relationship with Him by making a better world and society, reduce the cultural bipolarity.
- Our capacity to build human relationships, communities, discernment, find the meaning of our existence, transform suffering, transform us, heals us, execute social actions, and drive social change, and they all reduce the cultural bipolarity.

[50] Ibid. p. 9.

Cultural opposites disappear when the members of the society are connected by higher values, relationships, meanings, and discernment; bipolarity can find common ground.

Uncertainty avoidance softens when society becomes reasonable, people act out of discernment, and people become predictable, oriented to social action, reducing the anxiety generated by unpredictable social behavior.

Humane orientation, gender egalitarianism, future orientation, assertiveness, and performance orientation become balanced, reasonable, based on the connectedness, values, relationships, meanings, discernment of each person and community.

There is no space for endless social fragmentation, radicalization, and confrontations if each person and community have spirituality, greatness, and leadership, reducing cultural bipolarity.

IV.

SPIRITUALITY CONNECTS US WITH GOD, LEADING US TO EXPERIENCE HIS LOVING PRESENCE AND BUILD OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the fourth dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: the capacity to connect us with God, to experience God's loving presence in our life's journeys, inspiring our relationship with him, leading us to build our relationship with Him. Experiencing the loving presence of God and building our relationship with Him are extraordinary sources of happiness that lead toward world peace.

This chapter has a huge impact on our lives, in building our happiness, greatness and leadership.

This chapter also has a huge impact on the political economy and organizations: when we build our relationship with God, we also build human, social, renewal, process and structural capital, which have a positive impact on economic growth and social justice, on organizational success and social well-being.

World peace results from our capacity to connect with God and experience God's loving presence in our life's journeys, promoting inner peace, love, forgiveness, compassion, community building, social integration, the golden rule, and eliminating disruptive emotions.

World peace is the result of building our relationship with God by discovering God's perfections, transcendence, and love, realizing that we are his masterpieces, made in his image, collaborating with his creation, transforming reality, and making reality more beneficial to humankind, building community life and perform social actions.

Summary of the chapter

Any person may appreciate transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth and may discover the Creator's "participation," leading to a central aspect of our spirituality: building our relationship with the Creator.

Any person can experience the presence of God in our lives, can experience God's love, what the Song of Songs states as God's kisses, and the peace of being in the hands of an infinite God. The Song of Songs reflects God's loving presence in our hearts and life's journeys. During courtship, the soul discovers her beloved and expresses her deep desire to be with him, singing praises about him. During the wedding, He absorbs all her thoughts; he becomes everything to her. During the marriage, contemplation leads them to more profound love; their love grows through difficult times; with a happy ending, the lovers end up together, and both partners declare a permanent seal in their love.

The awareness of God's loving presence leads us to see our lives differently. Being able to perceive God's loving presence in our lives is probably the most powerful engine for promoting happiness.

For Luis Maria Etcheverry Boneo[1], we build our relationship with God by discovering His perfections, beauty, goodness, truth, and love reflected on all creation. We build our relationship with God when we realize that we are his masterpieces, a reflection of his beauty, goodness, truth, and love. We build our relationship with God by collaborating with his creation, transforming reality, and making reality more beneficial to humankind. We build our relationship with God by acting on values that lead us to express his perfections, goodness, beauty, and love. We build our relationship with God by acting on values that lead us to collaborate with God, making

[1] Etcheverry Boneo, Luís María. *Christianity and today's worldview. Knowledge, judgment, assessment and action*. Conference. Buenos Aires. Argentina. 1969

reality more perfect, beautiful, and valuable to humankind. We build our relationship with God by acting on values that lead us to develop and perfect social reality, as God is social, expressive, and helping others to know God and build relationships with Him. For Christians, we build our relationship with God by discovering his community life, the Christian Trinity, which leads us to know others, love them, create communities, and perform social actions. We build our relationship with God by meeting others, knowing others, loving them, helping them, performing social actions, and creating communities. We build our relationship with God by transforming reality to make it an expression of God's beauty, goodness, and truth through our daily work as engineers, physicians, artists, parents, educators, friends, and all other vocations. We build our relationship with God by exercising our vocation, our distinct role, within our communities, reflecting the perfections that exist in God, to perfect us individually and as communities, to help us to develop all our personal and community dimensions, and to perfect the world, perfect nature.

We build our relationship with God by embracing his mission: "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God; To comfort all who mourn" (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18).

The loving presence of God is expressed throughout Christianity: in the New Testament ("God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him" (1 John 4:16)), in Eastern Christianity ("pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:16), the prayer of the heart), for Saint Augustine (late have I loved you), for Saint Gregory (contemplation to dwelling in his love), for Saint Bernard (contemplation as a journey toward the presence of God, powered by the love of God), for Saint Francis (interior and exterior joy discovering the goodness of God, living on earth as in heaven), for

Saint Thomas Aquinas (the trinitarian God's presence in our lives), for saint john of the cross (contemplation, interior life, a life of prayer lead to discovering God's loving presence in all aspects of our lives), for Saint Teresa of Avila (an intimate sharing between friends, to be alone with him whom we know loves us), for Thomas Merton (contemplation as the work of love).

Many people resist spirituality, religions or have a negative view of God

Many of us are unaware of the reality of spirituality in our lives; many do not accept religiosity.

According to the Pew Research Center survey in the United States, in 2017, 48% of individuals considered themselves spiritual and religious, 27% spiritual but not religious, 18% were neither religious nor spiritual and 6% religious but not spiritual.

In Europe, according to the Eurobarometer survey, in 2010, 51% believed there is a God, 26% believed there is some spirit or life force, and 20% didn't think there is any spirit, God, or life force.

According to the Eurobarometer survey, in 2015, 45.3% were Catholic, 11.1% Protestant, 9.6% Orthodox, 5.6% Other Christian, 1.8% Muslim, 13.6% Non-Believer / Agnostic AtheiSaint

According to a Catholic News Agency survey[2] in the United States in 2016, 31.4% believed in an authoritarian God who is angry at the sins of humanity, 24% believed God is distant, a cosmic force that launched the universe and then left it alone, 16% believed in a critical God who keeps a critical eye on humanity, who does not intervene in events, only 23% believed in a benevolent God who sets absolute standards for humanity but is seen primarily as a loving and forgiving creator.

[2]https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/majority_of_americans_see_god_as_an_angry_judge_says_new_survey

Many people don't want to have children because they feel that the world is evil, have no hope that people can be saved, or think God can condemn anyone.

If we have a negative view of God, we are likely to extrapolate that negativity to other aspects of life: resenting God can make us unhappy.

Lee Dye[3] summarizes Julie Exline's research: her "survey says up to two-thirds of Americans blame God for their troubles."

Natural and religious spirituality

Many of us can accept that we have our own spiritual life, which arises from our interiority, like the contemplation of a landscape, the enjoyment of beautiful music, feeling joy with our children, with a friend: it is the product of our spirituality, meditation, contemplation, consciousness, reflection.

Many of us may have a religious spirituality, a personal relationship with God, which many times we can be aware of.

Are these two forms of spirituality different?

Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism show that they are connected, that we may have a spiritual experience, ignoring that there is a God behind the such experience.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel: Spirituality & religiosity for Judaism

The Old Testament describes how Jacob had a dream:

(Gn. 28, 11-17) When Jacob came upon a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had already set. Taking

[3] Dye, Lee. Are you mad at God? Survey says up to two-thirds of Americans blame God for their problems. *ABC News*. December 21, 2010. Retrieved from: https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/angry-god-thirds-americans-blame-god-problems-survey/story?id=12540557

one of the stones at the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.

Then he had a dream: a stairway* rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's angels were going up and down on it.

And there was the LORD standing beside him and saying: I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants.[…]

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!"

He was afraid and said: "How awesome this place is! This is nothing else but the house of God, the gateway to heaven!"[4]

This episode reflects how Jacob had a religious experience, but he was not aware of it: "Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!"

The Story of Tobias: Spirituality and religiosity for Judaism

The Book of Tobit of the Old Testament describes how Tobiah had a personal encounter with the angel Raphael:

(Tobit 5:4). Tobiah went out to look for someone who would travel with him to Media, someone who knew the way. He went out and found the angel Raphael standing before him (though he did not know that this was an angel of God).

At the end of the journey, Raphael reveals his identity and his purpose:

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[4] Scripture texts in this work are taken from *The Holy Bible. Douay-Rheims*. Catholic Bible. International Biblical Association https://www.wordproject.org/bibles/drc/index.htm

(Tobit 12:14-20). "God sent me to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand and serve before the Glory of the Lord." Greatly shaken, the two of them fell prostrate in fear. But Raphael said to them: "Do not fear; peace be with you! Bless God now and forever. As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting out of any favor on my part, but by God's will. So bless God every day; give praise with song, give thanks to God. Look, I am ascending to the one who sent me."

The angel traveled with him and instructed him; although Tobiah was unaware that he was an angel, God was interacting with him through the angel Raphael, although Tobiah was unaware.

The Road to Emmaus: Spirituality and religiosity for Christianity

The New Testament describes an encounter between Jesus and two disciples on the road to Emmaus, in which the disciples ignored that they were interacting with God. The passage is important because it describes a universal religious experience that we all may have in our lives, although we may not be aware of its religious dimension.

In Luke 24:13-35, after Jesus' death on the cross, two disciples leave Jerusalem:

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.

The passage begins with two disciples leaving Jerusalem, the spiritual capital, confused and discouraged after the death of Jesus. It

describes a universal spiritual experience of our anxiety, loss, confusion, and vulnerability.

> And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

Jesus came to them, even though the two disciples didn't realize it was Jesus. God is part of our lives, even if we don't realize it.

> He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."
>
> And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer* these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

God initiates dialogues with us, but like the disciples, we are slow of heart. God instructs us, explains scripture to us every day, is part of our lives, dialogues with us on our journeys, whether we realize it or not.

> As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When we realize that night is coming, we need spiritual support and ask God to stay with us.

> And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

God shares bread with us, feeds us, opens our eyes; our hearts burn, and we have a religious experience, but we do not realize that we are connecting with God.

> So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!." Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Spirituality and religiosity are many times difficult to separate. When we have a spiritual experience, we may not realize that it is religious, that God is interacting with us. It may trigger a spiritual journey, a return to Jerusalem, to the city of God, in some dimensions of our lives, enlightening our discernment. Our decisions provide meanings, transform us, give us courage, heal us, and lead us into social actions. With a burning heart, we return to the community to share with others our spiritual experience.

The Story of Arjuna: Spirituality and religiosity for Hinduism

Hinduism presents an intuition of the connection between spiritual and religious spirituality, although we do not realize that we are interacting with God.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Prince Arjuna dialogues with Lord Krishna, unaware that He was God.

> Lord Krishna arrived on the scene in a magnificent chariot yoked by white horses. He was to act as the charioteer of Arjuna, one of the Pandava princes. As the two armies were arrayed, ready for battle, Arjuna was bewildered by the scene before him, for he beheld on both sides, fathers and grandfathers, teachers and uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, relatives and comrades. Confusion reigned in Arjuna's mind. Should he participate in this terrible carnage? Was it proper to destroy one's relatives for the sake of a kingdom and some pleasures? Would it not be much better for him to surrender everything in favour of his enemies and retire in peace? Arjuna could do nothing but turn to Lord Krishna for guidance and enlightenment. [5]

This reflects a universal experience: we hear a spiritual voice within us, which can be generated by our spirituality or an external spiritual being: natural and religious spirituality can be intertwined.

We may have spiritual experiences that we believe come from within us, but God is behind them in reality.

Religious people, atheists, and agnostics can have experiences of natural or religious spirituality, whether or not they are aware of the presence of a higher being.

The chapter on "Discernment" provides ideas for clarifying what comes from God or other spiritual beings or from within ourselves.

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[5] *Bhagavad Gita*. Sri Swami Sivananda. The Divine Life Trust Society. http://www.SivanandaDlshq.org/

Accepting that spirituality can be natural or God-infused leads us to be open-minded, to dialogue with people with other beliefs, religious or not, people who are aware of their spirituality or not, trying to understand each other.

This book reflects spiritual and religious experiences; it honors various religious traditions and the spirituality of non-religious people.

Building a relationship with God by discovering that He made us

According to Luis Maria Etcheverry Boneo[6], we build our relationship with God as He made us; we exist because of Him, the same way an artisan, a manufacturer, is related to the things they build. Those things exist because the artisan, the manufacturer, created them, as the efficient cause is related to its effect.

We build our relationship with God as the paint is connected to the painter that builds that paint, based on the form they created in her mind and transferred it to the canvas. The way we are was first created in God's mind and transferred to us, creatures. The universe, the stars, the earth, the animals, and we human beings, were first in God's mind, as the formal cause is related to the shape of the created thing.

We build our relationship with God as He is the supreme source of all beauty, goodness, truth, and love that we seek, our goals in life, so He is our final goal, our final cause. We may believe that our goals are such and such things, but we do not realize that more than such specific things, we seek God as the ultimate beauty, goodness, and truth.

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[6] Etcheverry Boneo, Luís María. *Christianity and today's worldview. Knowledge, judgment, assessment and action*. Conference. Buenos Aires. Argentina. 1969

Building a relationship with God by collaborating with him on the creation

According to Luis Maria Etcheverry Boneo,[7] sharing and acting on God's values help us to build our relationship with him.

We build our relationship with God by acting on values that lead us to express his perfections, goodness, beauty, and love.

We build our relationship with God by acting on values that lead us to collaborate with God, making reality more perfect, beautiful, and valuable to humankind.

We build our relationship with God by acting on values that lead us to develop and perfect social reality, as God is social, expressive, and helping others to know God and build relationships with Him.

We build our relationship with God by transforming reality to make it an expression of God's beauty, goodness, and truth through our daily work as engineers, physicians, artists, parents, educators, friends, and all other vocations.

Building a relationship with God by sharing his community life

According to Luis Maria Etcheverry Boneo,[8] we build our relationship with God by meeting others, knowing others, loving them, helping them, performing social actions, and creating communities. Many virtues and many capacities cannot be exercised except in the community.

We build our relationship with God by exercising our vocation, our distinct role, within our communities, reflecting the perfections

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[7] Etcheverry Boneo, Luís María. *Christianity and today's worldview. Knowledge, judgment, assessment and action*. Conference. Buenos Aires. Argentina. 1969

[8] Etcheverry Boneo, Luís María. *Christianity and today's worldview. Knowledge, judgment, assessment and action*. Conference. Buenos Aires. Argentina. 1969

that exist in God, to perfect us individually and as communities, to help us to develop all our personal and community dimensions, and to perfect the world, perfect nature.

We build our relationship with God by expressing His Trinity and community life.

Consciousness, experiencing the presence of God

Bernard McGinn[9] explains the consciousness of God's "presence," part of "a process, a way of life, an encounter between God and the human." He refers to how "consciousness" is a better word than "experience," as it "involves loving and knowing." He also discusses how "presence" and "absence" are parts of the experience. Spirituality is the experience of a conscious presence, awareness, a heightened consciousness involving loving and knowing a process, and a way of life.

John O'Donohue[10] believes that the value of spirituality is that it leads to presence, forgotten and neglected domains of experience, and an internal relationship with nature. It produces warmth and passion, a great heart, and a great flow of feelings, so our questions, needs, and quest, our true longing, are already in the presence of the divine.

Pablo Marti[11] explains Newman's view of contemplation as the perception of God's presence in reality, in our souls, through continuous prayer during our daily activities; as Saint Paul said, "it is necessary to pray always and at all times (1 Thes 5:17)." It is necessary

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[9] McGinn, Bernard. *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism: 1350–1550* (The Presence of God, Vol. 3). 2016 The Crossroad publishing company. New York.

[10] O'Donohue, John. Spirituality as the art of real presence. *American Theological Library Association*. 2016

[11] Marti, Pablo. Contemplación y presencia de Dios en los sermones parroquiales de Newman. *Scripta Theologica* 37 (2005/3) 895-909 ISSN 0036-9764

to pray at specific times to reach that continuous presence. Spiritual life needs contemplation as the pulse and breath, so God is always in our thoughts, part of our vocation, and part of our human life.

Daniel De Pablo Maroto[12] relies on Saint John of the Cross to define presence as the perception of one's subjectivity, as an autonomous being and as a person existing in the world, as the experience, the feeling, the awareness of the presence of God.

José López Sánchez[13] states the characteristics of the presence. First, presence is an experience, a state of mind, more affective than intellectual, that cannot be expressed in words, communicated, or transferred to others. Second, presence is a state of knowledge that penetrates the truth, incapable of being fully explored or understood, illuminations, revelations full of meaning and importance, and a sensation of lasting authority. Third, presence has a short existence. Fourth, presence leads to some passivity and stillness.

Levinas[14] introduced God's relationship, personal contact with God's face, and the scriptures' reading as privileged roads to listen to God's insights; each person receives these insights differently. This plurality leads to a deeper human understanding of the reality of God. This relationship leads people to discover who they are, a personal awakening, and more profound discovery of their identity. The scripture is incorporated in the human, personal and relational worlds through language, expression, and words. Levinas introduces the religious and the human relational dimensions as part of a phenomenological knowing process. Moreover, both dimensions are

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12 De Pablo Maroto, Daniel. *Los místicos cristianos, creadores de la paz*. Salmanticensis 51 (2004) 5-41. Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.

13 López Sánchez, José. En torno a la experiencia mística. *Revista Española de Teología* 60 (2000) 85-97.

14 Levinas, Emannuel. *Ethics and Infinity*. Duquesne University Press. 1985. Pittsburgh.

critical to a personal discernment journey: the truth is found in a personal understanding of God's word in the scriptures and collective knowledge through listening to others.

The presence of God in Hindu spirituality: God within, internal knowledge, a pilgrimage of interiority, silence, stillness, harmony, peace, healing, equanimity, and happiness

Rajendra P. Pandeva[15] explains how the Vedas enlighten on the existence of the one manifested in the creation, the first principle, and cause of everything; the creation expresses the One.

The Vedas, the knowledge of the oldest texts of Hinduism, manifest the One. Through the Vedas, spiritual wisdom enters into the person, in our consciousness, in the form of universal symbols; it enters into our psychology, personality, memory, and imagination, communicating the essence of all beings, leading to understanding, to the foundation of communities of those that follow spiritual wisdom.

Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass[16] explains how God dwells in the person's interiority:

> The vocation of the human person in the state of integration is to remain in the inner shrine of his being, the sanctuary of the Spirit, and indweller and Lord of the inner world in a state of continuous meditation engaged in a single act of consciousness and expressed through silence. The sadhana (daily

[15] Pandeva, Rajendra P. *The Vision of the Vedic Seer*. Hindu Spirituality. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Delhi. India. 1989. pp. 5-6

[16] Amalorpavadass, Duraiswami Simon. "Integration and interiorization." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2016. The Netherlands.

> spiritual practice) which will cause an experience of integration at emotional level.[17]

Amalorpavadass speaks of an internal movement with wholeness, awareness, experience, to discover oneself and God, as modern sciences confirm: "self-knowledge, self-discovery, self-understanding, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-transcendence are an indispensable condition for understanding others and primarily for accepting others."[18]

Eugene F. Gorski[19] explains how some reforms influenced Hinduism during the Axial Age. They promoted mindfulness, interior life, and development of the inner self, a reflective consciousness, as ways of personal liberation from death, samsara (death and rebirth), and the law of karma (personal destiny depends on one's previous actions).

That personal liberation requires gaining knowledge, discovering a superior being, and its presence within every personal soul, requiring meditation.

The Bhagavad Gita[20] explains such discovery.

The story of Arjuna and Krishna (from the Bhagavad Gita, "The song of God," 200 BC) explains that the oldest son of a king was blind. He, therefore, could not be the heir to the throne, passing it over to his younger brother Pandu, who was kind, appropriate, and noble.

However, some people believed that Pandu should not inherit the throne; instead, the throne should pass to the son of the blind prince, even though he was selfish and disliked.

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[17] Ibid. p. 266.

[18] Ibid. p. 266.

[19] Gorski CSC, Eugene F. *Theology of religions. A sourcebook for interreligious study.* Paulist Press. 2008. New York.

[20] *Bhagavad Gita*. Sri Swami Sivananda. The Divine Life Trust Society. http://www.SivanandaDlshq.org/

The prince Arjuna, the son of Pandu, was in his chariot on the battlefield, confronting his relatives, teachers, friends, cousins in a battle to the death. Arjuna preferred to die instead of killing his kin: even if they should seek to slay him, he could not do them any harm.

Krishna (his chariot driver, who was, in fact, a God) insisted that it is his religious and ethical duty to fight, defend his caste, and defend what is best for the people.

Arjuna said to Krishna: "I cannot see where my duty lies," then they started to wrestle intellectually and spiritually.

Krishna sought to release him by leading him to insights into the truth of his inner self and his obligations, which would allow him to fight without accumulating negative Karma.

Krishna revealed his identity: he was Vishnu, the cosmic lord of life and death. At the different stages of life, people should follow the way of knowledge.

Arjuna was convinced to stand up and fight. He had a caste duty. Bodies die, but the person is eternal. The correct person does not withdraw from the world and goes to the forest: it is the one that acts in the world selflessly, without any desire for personal gain or loss, no personal ambition. If Arjuna fights to get wealth and power, his actions are unworthy, and he will be punished. However, he accrues no negative karma if he fights to restore justice and fulfill his caste obligation as a warrior.

Arjuna needed Meditation to overcome his emotional turmoil and understand Krishna. Only the person who turns inside can discover Brahman's reality, the eternal, the unborn: shutting out the outer world, looking inward, following one's breathing, stop the everyday working of the mind rooted in selfish desires. Then the person and the universal, eternal being are the same reality.

> Day after day, let the Yogi practice the harmony of soul in a secret place, in deep solitude, master of his mind, hoping for nothing, desiring nothing. Let him find a place that is pure and a seat

> that is restful. Let him practice Yoga for the purification of the soul; with the life of his body and mind in peace, his soul in silence before the One. With soul in peace, and all fear gone, and strong in the vow of holiness, let him rest with mind in harmony, his soul on me, his God supreme.[21]

Meditation leads to peace, internal harmony, harmony with others, connecting with the absolute.

Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass[22] explains how Indian spirituality leads to "a pilgrimage of interiority." Integration is produced through meditation, purification (liberation), self-introspection (concentration). Wholeness and integration are produced at three levels: personal, community, cosmic, healing brokenness and fragmentation, freedom from internal and external bondage, leading to authenticity, coherence of all levels and dimensions of the self, community, cosmic, and nature. This healing leads to silence, stillness, harmony, peace, equanimity, and happiness.

The Song of Songs: the loving presence of God in our life journeys

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty[23] describes Salomon's Song of Songs.

The following section summarizes Fr. Malaty's book; in his book, he presents citations from the scriptures and spiritual writers such as Origen, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine.

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[21] *Bhagavad Gita*. Edited by Juan Mascaró. Penguin Classics. 2003.

[22] Amalorpavadass, Duraiswami Simon. "Integration and interiorization." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2016. The Netherlands. p. 17.

[23] Malaty Fr. Tadros Y. *The song of songs. A Patristic Commentary*. Translated by Ferial Moawad. English Text Revised By: Rafik & Mary Nicola, Nagui Abdelsayed & Linda Ragheb. St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church. Sporting – Alexandria. 2005.

The "Song of Songs" suggests it is the greatest of all songs. It was written by King Solomon, according to the Bible, the wisest man ever lived. It symbolizes human love and God's love for his people, the Israelites, the Christians, all humankind, and God's love present in the human heart.

The main characters include the bridegroom (God, the Lord Jesus Christ), the bride called the Shulamite (the soul, the believer, the universal Church), the virgins (the believers who have not yet attained spiritual depth but have achieved some progress), the daughters of Jerusalem (the Jews), the friends of the bridegroom (the angels), and the young sister (humanity who needs the Lord to serve and care for her).

Charles Swindoll frames the Song of Songs as follows:

SONG OF SOLOMON

	The Courtship	The Wedding	The Maturing Marriage			
	CHAPTERS 1:2–3:5	*CHAPTERS 3:6–5:1*	*CHAPTERS 5:2–8:14*			
Emphasis	Bride muses about her beloved	Groom speaks tenderly to his bride	Wife longs for and describes her loving husband	Husband speaks of his wife in intimate terms	Both partners declare a permanent seal on their love
Chief Speaker	The Bride ("Darling")	The Groom ("Beloved")	Wife ("Darling")	Husband ("Beloved")	Duet
Theme	The joy and intimacy of love within the committed marriage relationship				
Key Verse	8:7				
Christ in Song of Solomon	Foreshadows the bridegroom relationship of Christ with His church				

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Figure 1 The Song of Songs. Extracted from Charles Swindoll. https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-wisdom-books/song-of-solomon

Section 1. The courtship. The bride muses about her beloved
The bride discovers her beloved and expresses her deep desire to be with him, singing praises about him; he absorbs all her thoughts, becoming everything to her

1:1. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth

The bride (the soul) declares how her heart is inflamed by how God communicates to her through kisses, God's expressions of love to her. However, the soul wants Him, not just the gifts, as Origen stated: "May He come down from the Cross to embrace me so I may be united with Him."

1.2. Your breast is better than wine

The breast provides the infant's milk, God's love, in its ultimate simplicity and innocence.

1.3. Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth

The finest perfumes, ointment with oil before the crucifixion, preparing for his mission that we also embrace: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:17-21; Is. 61:1).

1.4. The King has brought me into His chambers

The chambers are the spiritual world, our inner space, in deep communication with the Divine.

1.5. I am dark but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem

The soul is dark, weak, limited but made lovely by her relationship with the Lord, by her spiritual transformation.

1.6. My mother's sons fought for me and not against me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept

The apostles, the Church members, the people of goodwill, the saints and angels, support us, fight for us, with us, to defend our heart, our soul from evil.

1.7. Tell me, O whom I love, where You feed Your flock, where You make it rest at noon

In the middle of our complicated life and struggles, the bride wants to rest with God's flock at noon, with the brightest light, enlightened by God, in His glory, peace, and happiness.

1.8. If you do not know, O fairest, among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds' tents

Under his care, she became the fairest among women, and as such, she must join the community and feed the little goats.

1.9. I have compared you My love, to My filly among Pharaoh's chariots

The Lord has prepared his filly, souls, and Church as strong and powerful horses to enter battles without fear.

1.10-12. *Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver. While the King is at His table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance*

The fruits of the souls' battles are the virtues acquired, the presence of the Spirit of God, the spiritual beauty, the heavenly life.

1.12. While the King is at His table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance

The soul and the King send the fragrance of their love to each other.

1.13. A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts

The Lord lies close to the soul's heart.

1.14. My Beloved is to me cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi

The soul prepares for the union with her love by dying her hands with henna.

1.15. Beloved, you are fair, my love! Beloved, you are fair! You have dove's eyes

The groom declares His love and appreciation of the soul's beauty, the dove's eyes as the symbol of a pure heart, the dove as the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

1:16-17. Behold, You are handsome, my Beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also, our bed is green. The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir

The soul sees her groom as handsome. The bed is her body where her soul rests, green by the purity of the plants. The beams and rafters are the religious authorities that protect the soul from the sun, heat, storms.

The bride meets her groom in the garden

2:1-2: I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys. Like a lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters

In the middle of the barren valley (the gentiles), the soul appears as a lily among thorns, beautiful but vulnerable to being plucked and crushed.

2:3: Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down in His shade with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste

Since the soul lives among thorns and cannot rise to Him, He descends to her as an apple tree that provides shade to the soul and protects the soul from the heat and tribulations of life.

2:4-5. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love. Sustain me with cakes of raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick

The soul enters into the house of the Lord, abides by the rule of His house: love; she asks him to plan the life of love, this reign of true love, learns how to love God, as she is wounded in her journey toward love, she has no other desire but to be with Him and has no hope in anything but Him.

2:6. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me

Shee embraces the soul to receive the kisses of His divine love.

2:7. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases

This is the Church's voice to humanity, to remain in the presence and the love of the Lord.

The groom speaks tenderly of his bride

2:8-9. The voice of my Beloved, Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, He stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice

On the mountains of spirituality, the soul meets the Lord, above the world full of thorns, moving swiftly like a deer over the rocks toward creeks of life beyond the walls, windows, and lattice of our human limitations.

2:10-13. Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past The rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away!

The suffering is over for the souls that battled to get pure, and a new life of spiritual life starts, rising on the road of continuous perfection.

2:14. O My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff. Let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely

The soul enters into a deeper intimacy of God's life and asks to see and hear God more directly.

2:15. Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes

The little foxes, our minor sins, can destroy our spiritual life.

2:16,17. My Beloved is mine, and I am His. He feeds His flock among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether

This is the beginning of the spiritual matrimony between the soul and God. Jesus at the cross has offered his life for the souls; He is among the lilies, the souls with a pure heart, until the end of times when He comes again.

The bride has a dream

3:1-5. By night, I sought the one I love; I sought Him but I did not find Him. 'I will rise now,' I said, 'and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love.' I sought Him but I did not find Him. The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, 'Have you seen the One I love?' Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the One I love. I held Him and would not let him go, until I had brought Him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases

The soul seeks her groom, in the city, by external activities, but she does not find him until she arrives at her chamber, her inner heart, that she shares with him, and in intimacy, then He manifests to her and provides her peace.

Section 2. The wedding

The groom and the bride praise each other, the wedding takes place

3:6. Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders?

The darkness is over; the soul is elevated to heaven together with the groom, to the presence of the Lord in smoke, exchanging love in an endless contemplative prayer.

3:7-10. Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night. Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the king made himself a palanquin: he made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem

The couch is built to rest between battles, protected by sixty valiant men, which symbolizes the Kingdom of God. The twelve tribes with the swords of the spirit battling the five senses symbolize the helmet of salvation. Her pillars of silver symbolize the word of God. The golden support symbolizes the people carrying the Lord Jesus in their daily life. Its seat of purple symbolizes the Church's nature as a queen united with the eternal King, its interior paved with love.

3:11. Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart

The Church is calling the whole world to enjoy the banquet of the Cross.

4:1-7. Behold, you are fair, My love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, going down from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come up from the washing. Each one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them. Your lips are like a strand of scarlet, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like a piece of pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an armory, on which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. You are all fair, My love, and there is no spot in you

Jesus' Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection raised all souls, justified his Church to become the risen bride without blemish, so the Bridegroom sees her as very beautiful. The groom sees in her all beauty because His love hides all her weaknesses. His blood covers all her sins, showing all the adornment of her beauty. Thus He sees no spot in her.

4:8. Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards

However, the peace of prayer may not last, as the bride must follow the groom to spiritual war for the Lord, self-deprivation,

and voluntary poverty to meet the lions and leopards. The Christian life is not mere comfort in the prayer room, but rather it is a fierce war against darkness.

4:9. You have ravished My heart, my sister, My spouse; you have ravished My heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace

The Lord values her voluntary strife and suffering. He understands the language of the contrite eyes ravishes the language of her inner eyes, her inner tears, God's heart before Him.

4:10. How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better than wine is your love and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!

The Lord praises us, smells our spiritual strife as a sweet aroma, much better than all spices.

4:11. Your lips, O My spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon

He sees us as a bee working to produce honey, as a holy land flowing with honey and milk, filled with the sweet word of God.

4:12. A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed

He tells us that we are a garden, a spring, and a fountain, full of life, capabilities of the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us.

4:13-15. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices, a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon

The Lord finds various kinds of fruits to eat inside our souls, fragrant spices, ointments, and living water to drink.

4:16. Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden that its spices may flow out. Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat its pleasant fruits

The bride responds, asking the groom to send to her wind (His Holy Spirit) so she may bear abundant fruit, to her soul, her garden, that also becomes His garden, as He cared for it, worked on it.

The bride has another dream

5:1. I have come to My garden, My sister, My spouse; I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk. Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!

The Lord descends to the soul, calls her His garden, His sister and His bride, the place where he always wanted to be.

Section 3. The maturing marriage

The groom goes away for a while. The bride longs for him

5:2-3. I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my Beloved! He knocks saying, 'Open for me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one; for My head is covered with dew, My locks with the drops of the night'

The soul becomes lukewarm in loving Him, sleepy. However, God says, "Open for Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one," giving her hope and encouragement.

5:2-3. For my head is covered with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?

Despite the darkness and sleep of our lives, despite our recklessness and lukewarmth, He will always be with us to support us.

5:4-5. My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for Him. I arose to open for my Beloved and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh on the handles of the lock

He opened an inner latch inside our hearts so that they may long for Him.

5:6-9. I opened for my Beloved, but My Beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart went out to Him when He spoke. I sought Him but I could not find Him; I called Him but He gave me no answer. The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him I am lovesick! What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?

He forsakes us to remind us of our weaknesses, to reveal the real goals of our lives, to test our faith, to let us walk on our independence, to lead us to persevere. The ministers of the word also help us to persevere.

The marriage grows through difficult times, with a happy ending, the lovers end up together

5:10. My Beloved is white and ruddy. Chief among ten thousand. His head is like the finest gold; His locks are wavy, and black as a raven. His eyes are like

doves, by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set. His cheeks are like a bed of spices, like banks of scented herbs. His lips are lilies dripping liquid myrrh. His hands are rods of gold set with beryl. His body is carved ivory inlaid with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of fine gold. His countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

White means splendor, gold means divinity, his eyes like doves describe innocence, washed in milk describe faith as food for the souls, rods or circles refer to eternity, legs refer to the ability to walk steadfastly, its length knows cedar, straightness, and sweet smell, the words are sweet because they are spirit and life, with power and authority.

6:1. Where has your Beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your Beloved turned aside that we may seek Him with you?

The unbelievers questioned.

6:2-3. My Beloved has gone to His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine. He feeds His flock among the lilies.

The Lord is in the garden in the soul of the bride, because He loves her, the soul should not waste time looking outside, through His humility, He descended to the souls and entered the hearts of His people; the soul wants to give Him all her inner feelings and energies.

6:4-10. O, my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats going down from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep which have come up from the washing; every one bears twins,

and none is barren among them. Like a piece of pomegranate are your temples behind your veil. There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her. The daughters saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines, and they praised her. Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?

The groom sees her as beautiful, powerful. He cannot endure seeing the soul's tears. His love for the soul will never change.

The husband speaks of his wife in intimate terms

6:11-13. I went down to the garden of nuts to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates had bloomed. Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people (or "Amminadab"). Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look upon you! What would you see in the Shulamite as it were, the dance of the two camps?

The soul goes down to her inner garden, to her heart, to work in the fruits of the valley, which symbolize the Word of God as a delicious meal that occupies the heart. The Lord loves the soul in peace, ready for spiritual warfare.

7:1-9. How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a skillful workman. Your navel is a rounded goblet which lacks no blended beverage. Your waist is a heap of wheat set about with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes like the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple; the king is held captive by its tresses. How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights! This stature of yours is like a palm

tree, and your breasts like its clusters. I said, 'I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches.' Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and the roof of your mouth like the best wine. The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved, moving gently the lips of sleepers

Still in the inner garden, in the heart, both experience mutual love, spiritual union. The groom describes the bride, her beauty, her strength, rejoices with His fruitful bride, so He rises to the palm tree to reap its fruits. Both are elevated to eternity.

7:10-13. I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me. Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open, and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my Beloved

The soul responds that all the good qualities that He mentioned are from Him. This is true marital love, each partner captivates the other by opening their heart, going from village to village of her inner heart and the hearts of others, ministering to others, and the soul presents the fruits of others to Him.

8:1. Oh, that you were like my brother, who nursed at my mother's breasts! If I should find you outside, I would kiss you; I would not be despised, I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother. She who used to instruct me, I would cause you to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate

In previous songs, the soul wanted to be alone with Him, one time in the wilderness, a second time in the garden, a third time in the field and the village, and now in her mother's house, in ministry, taking care of her brothers.

8:3,4. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.

In her ministry, the soul does not want to neglect her groom.

The conclusion: both partners declare a permanent seal in their love

8:5. Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?

The world asks the soul, who is this magnificent Lord, and how does He love the soul?

8:6-7. Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised

The soul wants to occupy the entire heart of the Lord.

8:8-10. We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers; then I became in his eyes as one who found peace

It defines the life of the soul in ministry, offering her life for her siblings.

8:11-14. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; he leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have a thousand, and those who

keep its fruit two hundred. You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice, let me hear it! Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices

The soul presents the Lord to the world. The vineyard belongs to the Lord. The Lord cultivates it to develop its spiritual fruits. All members are the fruit of the Lord's work.

The loving presence of God in the New Testament: "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him" (1 John 4:16)

Saint John describes the "presence" and its connection with love.

The intimacy of the Trinity leads to the intimacy between God and humankind.

- John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- John 10:38. The Father is in me, and I in the Father.
- John 14:10-11. Do you not believe, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself. But the Father who abideth in me, he doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?
- John 14:15-18. If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him: but you shall know him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.
- John 17:20-26. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; That they

> all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as we also are one: I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one: and the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast also loved me. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; that they may see my glory which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world. Just Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee: and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have made known thy name to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

The love within the Trinity, the love of God, lead to love for one another.

- 1 John 4:15-16. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we have known, and have believed the charity, which God hath to us. God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.
- John 13:34-35. A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.
- John 14:23. Jesus answered, and said to him: If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.
- John 16:26-27. In that day you shall ask in my name; and I say not to you, that I will ask the Father for you: For the

> Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

Bouyer[24] discusses how the Jewish introduced mysticism in the practice of God's "presence" in the temple, in their daily devotions, their prayers, the reading, and meditation of the scriptures.

Bernard McGinn[25] discusses how Jesus' spirituality reflects a dual presence, God Father is present with Jesus, and Jesus is present with us, the union between God Father and Jesus is shared with us, God's love is shared with us.

- John 15:1-17. I am the true vine; and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit, he will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean by reason of the word, which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you. In this is my Father glorified; that you bring forth very much fruit, and become my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, I also

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[24] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 3-34.

[25] McGinn, Bernard. *The essential writings of Christian mysticism.* The Modern Library. The Random House. New York. 2006. p. xv.

> have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; as I also have kept my Father's commandments, and do abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled. This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you. I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you. You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

McGinn[26] discusses how "participation" leads to a union with God. In the spiritual tradition, there are many expressions of the union or the contact between the person and God, such as contemplation, vision, ecstasy, deification, birthing, endless desire, and pursuit. However, McGinn prefers to use the notion of "presence," which involves all the possible ways God comes to transform our minds and lives.

> God does not become present to human consciousness the way that an object in the concrete world is said to be present. Encountering God is much more like meeting a friend or loved one.[27]

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[26] Ibid. p. xv.
[27] Ibid. p. xv.

Presence of God in Eastern Christianity, "pray without ceasing," the prayer of the heart

Eastern Orthodox Christians understood spirituality as presence. Gregory Nazianzen stated that:

> For nothing seemed to me so desirable as to close the doors of my senses, and, escaping from the flesh and the world, collected within myself, having no further connection than was absolutely necessary with human affairs, and speaking to myself and to God.[28]

As Louis Bouyer[29] explains, the sense of God's presence is the experience of the Bride of the Canticle. She is surrounded by the divine night in which the Bridegroom comes near without showing himself, but by giving the soul a sense of his presence. That way, the presence reflects the most intimate effect of the spiritual senses, developed with the carnal senses' extinction.

Kallistos Ware provides a rich explanation of ceaseless prayer, as recommended by Saint Paul.

> Pray without ceasing (1Thes. 5:17). The Jesus prayer, the prayer of the heart, the constant repetition of a brief prayer such as "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" in rhythm with the breathing and the heart. The Holy Name "Jesus" is a source of power and grace. It brings us to the constant remembrance of

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[28] Saint Gregory Nazianzen. *Oration II, 7*. Translated by Charles Gordon Browne, M.A., Rector of Lympstone, Devon; and James Edward Swallow, M.A., Chaplain Of The House Of Mercy, Horbury.

[29] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. p. 363

God, the sense of his presence, his awareness, at all times: while laboring, eating, talking, or resting.[30]

The prayer of the heart: have mercy of what?

The sentence "Have mercy on me" is present in the Old Testament, reflecting several spiritual realities:

- Psalm 51:11. Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
- Psalm 5:1-2. Give ear, O Lord, to my words, understand my cry. Hearken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God.
- Psalm 6:2. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.
- Psalm 9:13. Have mercy on me, O Lord: see my humiliation which I suffer from my enemies.
- Psalm 24:16-17. Look thou upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor. The troubles of my heart are multiplied: deliver me from my necessities.
- Psalm 26:11. I have walked in my innocence: redeem me, and have mercy on me.
- Psalm 27:7. Hear, O Lord, my voice, with which I have cried to thee: have mercy on me and hear me.
- Psalm 31:9-12. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am afflicted: my eye is troubled with wrath, my soul, and my belly: For my life is wasted with grief: and my years in sighs. My strength is weakened through poverty and my bones are disturbed. I am become a reproach among all my enemies, and very much to my neighbours; and a fear to my acquaintance.

[30] Ware, Kallistos. The origins of Jesus Prayer: Diadochus, Gaza, Sinai. *The study of spirituality*. pp. 173-184

They that saw me without fled from me. I am forgotten as one dead from the heart. I am become as a vessel that is destroyed.

- Psalm 41:10. But thou, O Lord, have mercy on me, and raise me up again : and I will requite them.
- Psalm 56:1. Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me under foot; all the day long he hath afflicted me fighting against me.
- Psalm 67:1. May God have mercy on us, and bless us: may he cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us, and may he have mercy on us.
- Psalm 86:16. O look upon me, and have mercy on me: give thy command to thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid.
- Psalm 119:29. Remove from me the way of iniquity: and out of thy law have mercy on me.
- Psalm 123:3. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us: for we are greatly filled with contempt.
- Micah 7. He will turn again, and have mercy on us: he will put away our iniquities: and he will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea.
- 1 Maccabees 4:10. 2 Maccabees 2:16. The Lord will have mercy on us, and he will remember the covenant of our fathers, and he will crush this army before our face this day. God, who has freed his people and has rendered to all the inheritance, and the kingdom, and the priesthood, and sanctification, just as he promised in the law, will quickly have mercy on us and will gather us together from under heaven into the holy place.
- Judith 7:20. May you have mercy on us, for you are pious.

- Esther 7:3. If I have found Favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please thee, give me my life for which I ask, and my people for which I request.
- Sirach 36:17-18. Show mercy to the people called by your name: Israel, whom you named your firstborn. Take pity on your holy city: Jerusalem, your dwelling place.

In the New Testament, Jesus mentions mercy in the Beatitudes: "Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them,"

- Matthew 9:27-30. And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, O Son of David. And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them, Do you believe, that I can do this unto you? They say to him, Yea, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done unto you. And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, See that no man know this.
- Matthew 14:14. And he coming forth saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them, and healed their sick.
- Matthew 15:22. A woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously troubled by the devil.
- Matthew 17:15. Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic, and suffereth much: for he falleth often into the fire, and often into the water.
- Matthew 18:26-27. Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt.

- Matthew 20:30-34. Two blind men sitting by the way side, heard that Jesus passed by, and they cried out, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And Jesus stood, and called them, and said: What will ye that I do to you? They say to him: Lord, that our eyes be opened. And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw, and followed him.
- Mark 1:40-42. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down said to him: If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus having compassion on him, stretched forth his hand; and touching him, saith to him: I will. Be thou made clean. And when he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean.
- Mark 5:18-20. And when he went up into the ship, he that had been troubled with the devil, began to beseech him that he might be with him. And he admitted him not, but saith to him: Go into thy house to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men wondered.
- Mark 6:34. And Jesus going out saw a great multitude: and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things.
- Mark 10:46-47. As he went out of Jericho, with his disciples, and a very great multitude, Bartimeus the blind man, the son of Timeus, sat by the way side begging. Who when he had heard, that it was Jesus of Nazareth, began to cry out, and to say: Jesus son of David, have mercy on me.

- Mark 17:12. As he was entering a certain town, ten leprous men met him, and they stood at a distance. And they lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, Teacher, take pity on us.
- Mark 10:46-51. Bartimeus the blind man, the son of Timeus, sat by the way side begging. Who when he had heard, that it was Jesus of Nazareth, began to cry out, and to say: Jesus son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he might hold his peace; but he cried a great deal the more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus, standing still, commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying to him: Be of better comfort: arise, he calleth thee. Who casting off his garment leaped up, and came to him. And Jesus answering, said to him: What wilt thou that I should do to thee? And the blind man said to him: Rabboni, that I may see.
- Luke 1:50. And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear him.
- Luke 1:54. He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy.
- Luke 1:58. And her neighbours and kinsfolks heard that the Lord had shewed his great mercy toward her, and they congratulated with her.
- Luke 7:13. Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy toward her, he said to her: Weep not.
- Luke 10:33. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion.
- Luke 10:36-37. Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers? But he said: He that shewed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner.

Why is the prayer of the heart so important?

These passages can lead us to become aware of what parts of our lives require God's mercy, God's help. It is a profound psychological and existential journey; it brings the Bible's wisdom to our personal lives. We ask for mercy on aspects of our past, bad decisions, failures, aspects of our present, concerns, and future aspects, anxieties.

A ceaseless prayer of "Lord have mercy" is a journey toward our core, our true self, authentic interiority: fears, depressions, anxieties, sadness. All the dimensions we mentioned in the introduction of this book: loneliness, economic fears, abuses, depression, we can confront all of them, make them conscious, and put them in the presence of God so that He can take care of them. Many of the miracles of the Bible were preceded by a "Lord have mercy."

As Kallistos Ware explains, the discipline of frequent repetition leads to a constant awareness of God's presence, a personal encounter, ceaseless remembrance of God. It is a quest for inner silence, stillness, simplicity, imageless, non-discursive prayer, and putting away thoughts, leading to the heart's silence. It is an affective and conscious experience that brings the soul from fragmentation to unity, gathers together the fragmented self, from a diversity of thoughts and images to a state to focused concentration. It produces an intuitive awareness, a feeling of joy, sweetness, and light to the heart.

The prayer becomes spontaneous, an organic part of us, like breathing, like a child calling his mother even sleeping. It is not just a mantra: it is a personal invocation to the person of Jesus, which presupposes an active faith in him.[31]

The unceasing prayer of faith: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," in humility and recollection, places us wholly in the hands of God. This constant prayer protects the heart, as in the heart are the

[31] Ibid. pp. 173-184.

spirit and all the soul's thoughts and hope, producing peace, tranquility, a spiritual love, a burning desire for God, and a sanctifying perfection.[32]

Catholic spirituality involves other prayers that promote similar intuitions: apophatic spirituality, interior silence, contemplation.

During the Rosary, the vocal prayers lead us to make interior silence, to share Mary's contemplation of Jesus' life. Each mystery reminds us of images of the New Testament.

During the Divine Mercy, the vocal prayers lead us to make interior silence, to contemplate Jesus passion, in the loving presence of God Father.

The loving presence of God for Saint Augustine: the presence of God, "Late have I loved you"

As McGinn explains, Augustine had mystical experiences of presence as in the case of Ostia:

> In the desire to touch you where you can be touched to cleave to you where such cleaving is possible […] Late have I loved you, Beauty so old and so new […] You were with me, and I was not with you […] You have touched me and I am on fire to enjoy your peace.[33]

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[32] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 376-379.

[33] Augustine, The Confessions of Saint Augustine. Translator: Edward Bouverie Pusey. Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm

McGinn[34] discusses how, in his explanations of the Psalms, Augustine reflects his mysticism. In the explanation of Psalm 27, although "he uses the passage primarily to stress that true and full contemplation can only be found in heaven," however, we can start enjoying his protection on earth, even without any consciousness of the presence of God in this life:

- Psalm 27:3-5. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. That I may see the delight of the Lord, and may visit his temple. For he hath hidden me in his tabernacle; in the day of evils, he hath protected me in the secret place of his tabernacle.
- Psalm 42:1-3. As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been any bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily : Where is thy God?

For McGinn, Augustine explains that burning desire expresses a desire for illumination, love, and knowledge. The enjoyment of the presence of the face of God can be brief in this life: "Augustine was interested in the prophetic nature of the Psalms, the way in which they foretold the life of Christ on earth." Augustine emphasizes the need to restore the image of God in men, and as a result of that, the image of the Trinity. Our spirituality is a road to restoring the image of God in us, the knowledge and love, among ourselves, to reflect our knowledge and love for God.

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[34] McGinn, Bernard. The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. pp. 238-239.

The loving presence of God for Saint Gregory: contemplation to dwelling in His love

As McGinn states, Saint Gregory expressed the centrality of God's presence in our lives:

> The human person was created to contemplate the Creator so that he might always seek his beauty and dwell in the solemnity of his love […] Adam was first and foremost a contemplative who enjoyed continuous interior loving sight of God […] The Fall, first and foremost, was the loss of the ability to contemplate owing to Adam's turning to the exteriority of sin, he was poured out outside of himself, and was no longer able to see the joys of the celestial homeland […] God wants to restore Adam's contemplative vision to humanity […] The spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit is an internal teacher of contemplation, enkindling love, without him the word is useless.[35]

The loving presence of God for Saint Bernard: contemplation as a journey toward the presence of God, powered by the love of God

As McGinn states, Saint Bernard viewed the presence of God in our souls as a journey to union with Him:

> The soul's advance in contemplation, according to Bernard, is a journey powered by the love that makes God more and more present to us. A person is present to God to the extent that the person loves him […] God dwells in every good soul as a special "heaven" of its own according to the capacity of its love. As the

[35] McGinn, Bernard. The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. pp. 40-44.

> soul progressively enlarges in love toward the goal of full liberty of spirit, it becomes a more commodious home for its Divine Guest, and it also becomes more "sensitive" to the interior experience of his presence […] The Son raises and heals reason so that it can judge itself in order to produce humility, the Holy Spirit visits and purifies the will to give birth to charity, finally the Father unites to himself as glorious bride.[36]

The loving presence of God for Saint Francis: interior and exterior joy discovering the goodness of God, living on earth as in heaven

As McGinn states,[37] Saint Francis presents a new consciousness of the presence of God. Every single person, not just monks, can enjoy the direct presence of God in the world. Poverty allows us to live the presence of God in the open world: the cloister is the world, God's paradise.

As McGinn explains, Francis desired solitary places to pray fervently to God, to follow Christ, to imitate him entirely. In his desire for apostolic poverty, he wanted to live the Gospel to the extreme; he took Christ's indication to his disciples:

> Luke 9:3. "Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic."
> Matthew 10:9-10. "Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep."

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[36] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. p. 190

[37] McGinn, Bernard. *The Flowering of Mysticism. Men and women in the new mysticism. 1200 - 1350*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1998. New York. p. 13.

As Etienne Gilson explains, through presence, Francis discovered the goodness of God, which helps us to live on earth as in heaven:

> In each one of the works of the Lord he recognised the hand of the workman and his soul was filled with joy: everything that seemed to him good shouted in his ears the goodness of God; that is why seeking everywhere his Well-Beloved in the traces of Him that remained in things, he used all things whatsoever as steps to mount to Him. From this comes that unique love he bore to things, speaking to them, exhorting them to bless God, treating them with the respect and the tenderness merited by their high dignity as images of their Creator. Above all creatures he loved lambs because they were immediate symbols of Jesus Christ, but he loved likewise the sun for its beauty and fire for its purity. When he washed his hands he was careful not to let any drop of water fall in a place where it would be in danger of being trampled under foot, for water is the figure of Holy Penitence and it is by the water of Baptism that the soul is cleansed from original sin. He could not walk upon stones without reverence and awe, for love of Him Who is the keystone of the comer. He would not let them cut all the wood from a tree to light the fire, for love of Him Who wrought our salvation on the wood of the Cross.
>
> Saint Francis, then, lived continuously in the midst of a forest of symbols and the substantial reality of this symbolism was so living that by it he regulated all his actions; just as we conform our attitude to what things seem to us to be, Saint Francis saw their actual nature in them and conformed his actions to it. From this comes that interior and exterior joy that he drew unfailingly

> from all things; in touching them or in contemplating them it was as though his spirit was no longer upon earth but in Heaven.[38]

The loving presence of God for Saint Thomas Aquinas. The Trinitarian God's presence in our lives

According to Jean-Pierre Torrell[39] Saint Thomas presents a radical view:

> Among all the things that we must study concerning God in himself, we must put first, for it is the necessary foundation of the whole work, the demonstration of God's existence. If that is not achieved, then the entire study of divine realities fatally collapses.[40]

Torrell explains how our knowledge of God is based on two approaches. Thomas Aquinas presents first the apophatic view:

> When we proceed to the knowledge of God by the path of negation, we deny immediately that he has corporeal traits, and then we even deny the intellectual traits as they are found in creatures, such as goodness and wisdom; and thus there only remains in our understanding his existence and nothing else, and our intellect then finds itself in a certain confusion. Finally, being itself, such as it is found in creatures, is also denied him and he thus remains in a certain darkness of ignorance, ignorance through

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[38] Gilson, Etienne. *The philosophy of Saint Bonaventure.* Translated from the French by Dom Illtyd Trethowan Monk of Downside Abbey and Frank]. Sheed. Published by Saint Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N. J. Distributed by Desclee Co. 1965. Paris, Tournai, New York, Rome. p. 65.

[39] Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas.* The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011.

[40] Ibid. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles I 9.*

> which we are united to God in the best way, at least in the present life; as Dionysius says, this ignorance is a kind of cloud in which God is said to dwell.[41]

However, for Thomas, the negation does not eliminate the need for affirmation:

> We know God's relationship to his creatures, namely that he is the cause of them all; we know what differentiates him from these creatures, which is to say that he is himself nothing of that of which he is the cause. Finally, we know that, whatever we discard in thinking of him, we discard to indicate not some lack, but rather an excess.[42]

The loving presence of God in our lives

Torrell explains how Thomas describes the presence of God in each creature:

> Through his presence, someone is said to be in all realities that are under his gaze, as the king is said to be through his presence in his palace. God is also everywhere by his presence, 'for everything in the world is naked and open to his sight (Heb. 4:13).[43]

For Torrell, a second presence occurs when a person adheres to God in faith and charity: "If any among you loves me… we will come to him and make our dwelling within him (John 14:23)." A third presence takes place through the incarnation of the Son, the presence of Jesus in the world, through his communication in the Godspell.

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41 Ibid. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Sentences I d. 8 q. 1 a. 1 ad 4*.
42 Ibid. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologicae Ia q. 12 a. 13*.
43 Ibid. *In Ioannem I, lect. 5, n. 134*.

And that presence is marked by God's love for all creatures. As Thomas describes: we were created out of love, and the love we have in ourselves leads God to love us endlessly, he loves it with the same love that he loves himself.

The end of our journeys: beatitude

Torrell explains the end of our journeys; according to Thomas, our lives are dynamic in a journey toward God; our beatitude requires becoming like him. That journey from God toward God requires to imitate Jesus: "during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (John 13:3). Christ becomes an example of virtuous, prayer, battling temptations, obedience, humility, constancy, justice, dealing with suffering.

As Torrell explains our journey toward beatitude is an entire life program toward becoming in his image: "The image of someone is found in another … as the image of the king may appear in his son."[44] We gradually ascend to God in a spiritual journey. The indwelling of the Trinity in our souls empowers the presence of God, as the core of our journey to becoming in the image of God. The presence of God in our souls is the source of experiential knowledge and love: we experience knowledge and love. That personal encounter is the source of knowledge and love. Thomas concludes: "man finds his perfect beatitude in the enjoyment of God."[45] As Augustine said: "God became man so that man might become God."

The Holy Spirit in our journey

As Torrell explains, for Thomas, the Holy Spirit had a central role in the creation, in the operation of the creation, originating life,

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[44] Ibid. *ST Ia q. 35 a. 2 ad 3.*
[45] Ibid. *SCG IV 54, n. 3926.*

presence in our lives, revealing divine mysteries to us, inspiring our friendships, leading our friendship with God, leading us to the Father, harmonizing our will with God's will.

Torrell discusses how Thomas describes what characterizes a spiritual person:

> "The wind blows where it will, and you hear its voice, but you do not know whence it comes nor where it goes. Thus it is for whoever is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) Quite clearly this refers to the Holy Spirit. And there is nothing astonishing in this, for as [Jesus] had said: "He who is born of the Spirit is spirit," because the properties of the Spirit are found in the spiritual man, as the properties of fire are found in a burning coal. Now in him who is born of the Holy Spirit there are the four properties of the Holy Spirit that we have just enumerated.[46]

These four properties are: first is the power of the Holy Spirit, who inspires 'when he will and where he will' by illuminating hearts; the second the capacity to 'hear His voice' when he speaks interiorly to the human heart, and when He speaks in the scriptures or through preachers; the third is his hidden origin, 'you do not know whence it comes'; the fourth quality is his end, 'you do not know where it goes'. The Holy Spirit makes us free, makes us wise:

- Isaiah 11:2. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness.

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[46] Torrell O.P., Jean-Pierre. Saint Thomas Aquinas. Volume 2. Spiritual Master. Translated by Robert Royal. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. 2003. p. 200

- Corinthians 11:7-10. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues.

If the Spirit leads us, our decisions change, our behaviors change, generating a new law for us, the law of the spirit.

The loving presence of God for Saint John of the Cross: contemplation, interior life, a life of prayer lead to discovering God's loving presence in all aspects of our lives

In Saint John of the Cross' Spiritual Canticle, the soul claims for God's loving presence:

> Reveal Your presence, And let the vision and Your beauty kill me. Behold the malady Of love is incurable Except in Your presence and before Your face.
>
> O crystal well! O that on Your silvered surface You would mirror forth at once Those desired eyes Which are outlined in my heart.
>
> Turn them away, O my Beloved! I am on the Wing.[47]

After insisting to God of the pain that his absence produces on the soul, God starts presenting himself to the soul:

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[47] John of the Cross. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

> Return, My Dove! The wounded hart looms on the hill In the air of your flight and is refreshed.[48]

And now the soul enters into deeper contemplation, feeling God's love; as the verses below show, there is no single verb, no actions. What is the impact of this experience of presence on the soul? As John explains:

> On this happy day the soul not only ceases from its anxieties and loving complaints, but is, moreover, adorned with all grace, entering into a state of peace and delight, and of the sweetness of love, as it appears from these stanzas, in which it does nothing else but recount and praise the magnificence of the Beloved, which it recognizes in Him, and enjoys in the union of the betrothal.
>
> My Beloved, The mountains, The solitary wooded valleys, The strange islands, The roaring torrents, The whisper of the amorous gales; The tranquil night at the approaches of the dawn, The silent music, The murmuring solitude, The supper which revives, and enkindles love.[49]

Each paragraph reflects what God is to the soul, how His presence in the creation enkindles his love, as John explains:

> The mountains are high fertile, extensive, beautiful, lovely, flowery, and odorous.
>
> The solitary wooded valleys are tranquil, pleasant, cooling, shady, abounding in sweet waters, and by the variety of trees growing in them, and by the melody of the birds that frequent them, enliven and delight the senses, their solitude and silence procure us a refreshing rest.

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

> The strange islands, distant and unknown to many of us, far beyond the common notions of men, God is called strange by the soul, His ways, judgments, and works are also strange, new, and marvelous to men.
>
> The roaring torrents, the soul is conscious, it feels itself to be so overwhelmed with the torrent of the Spirit of God, fills the soul with peace and glory, filling the vessels of its humility and the emptiness of its desires, is a spiritual sound and voice overpowering all other sounds and voices in the world.
>
> The whisper of the amorous gales, the most sublime and sweet knowledge of God and of His attributes, the highest delight of which the soul is capable in this life.
>
> The tranquil night at the approaches of the dawn, the soul is in possession and fruition of all the calm, repose, and quiet of a peaceful night, and receives at the same time in God a certain dim, unfathomable divine intelligence.
>
> The silent music, the murmuring solitude, a concert of sublimest melody, it is knowledge tranquil and calm, without audible voice.
>
> The supper which revives, and enkindles love, through this sweet communication he produces recreation, satisfaction, and love.[50]

Through his poem, John relies on symbols, metaphors in a profound phenomenological way, describes the universal impact of the presence of God in us, how through a religious spirituality, we can know God and transform us through our participation in God's life.

His view of God's presence reflects significant similarities between Judeo-Christian spirituality, Eastern spirituality, Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam: meditation, contemplation, detachment, the Eight Noble Truths, the journey toward union with God.

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[50] Ibid.

Contemplation to be attentive to the love of God

Saint John of the Cross proposed a life model founded on contemplation to respond to problems. Contemplation, interior life, a life of prayer lead to discovering God's presence in all aspects of our lives, a constant dialogue with God in good or bad times, strengthening our faith.

For Karol Wojtyła,[51] Saint John of the Cross stated that faith is the means of union with God. However, faith may produce emptiness and darkness. Meditation requires imagination or the intellect, which are limited, and may lead to aridity. The soul may not find any gratification. When meditation finds its limits, contemplation may provide some gratification in being alone, inner peace, spiritual attentiveness to the love of God, an "obscure and general type of knowledge," and contemplation. Through the repetition of acts of prayer, of "loving knowledge," the soul has acquired the habit of interior prayer, the habit of "loving knowledge."[52]

As Macon Boczek[53] explains, the intellect is joined to God by faith, producing a mystical knowledge and love, a dark and loving knowledge of God arising from the Divine's loving touch that creates the greatest delight as a mystical experience.

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[51] Wojtyła, Karol. *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*. Translated by Jordan Aumann, O.P. The original text "Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce" was a doctoral thesis presented at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome. Wipf & Stock, Oregon. 1981.

[53] Boczek, Ph.D., Macon. *Faith as an "essential likeness" of human and divine reason.* Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29- September 1, 2012.

The loving presence of God for Saint Teresa of Avila: an intimate sharing between friends, to be alone with Him whom we know loves us

According to Joanna Farrugia,[54] Saint Teresa believed that mental prayer is an affirmation of awareness of the extraordinary reality that God is accessible to human beings in a personal, one-to-one relationship, treasuring the moment of intimacy with God.

Teresa believed in a balance between the contemplative and the active life. Prayer is meant to replenish our enthusiasm and vigor to serve God. It is much more important simply to rejoice in the Lord's presence than to tire ourselves out by occupying our minds with deductive reasoning: not to think much but to love much. "Mental prayer, in my view, is nothing but friendly intercourse, and frequent solitary converse, with Him Who we know loves us."[55]

It is not important whether we are delighted by consolation or tortured by dryness and desolation during prayer. What is essential is this desire, which shows our love for God. This attachment to God and detachment from ourselves is the measure of the perfection of our prayer.

The loving presence of God for Thomas Merton. Contemplation as the work of love

Thomas Merton[56] believed that contemplation is required to recover our natural unity, simplicity, inner integration, inner self, inner

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[54] Farrugia, Joanna. *St Teresa of Jesus, mental prayer and the humanity of Jesus*. The Way, 57/3 (July 2018), 31-39.

[55] Teresa of Avila. The Life of Teresa Of Jesus. Translated & Edited By E. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D. http://www.carmelitemonks.org/Vocation/teresa_life.pdf

[56] Merton, Thomas. *The Inner Experience. Notes on Contemplation (I)*. Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust.

life, spiritual life, living awareness, the foundation of our spiritual, religious, moral, and artistic experiences.

Our inner self is the rock that supports our awareness of God, the mirror on which God sees Himself, leading us to see God and communicate with Him. God dwells in our inner self, an experience of the presence of God in which God dwells in us. As a result of the awakening of the inner self, the awareness of God, the Presence of God, we breathe and live and act as one with Him:

> It is nothing else but the message of Christ calling us to awake from sleep, to return from exile, and find our true selves within ourselves, in that inner sanctuary which is His temple and His heaven, and (at the end of the prodigal's homecoming journey) the "Father's House."[57]

Catharina Stenqvist[58] describes how Merton religious experience and his connection with Zen Buddhism helped him to understand contemplation, the value of awareness:

> I live in the woods out of necessity. I get out of bed in the middle of the night because it is imperative that I hear the silence of the night, alone, and, with my face on the floor, say psalms, alone, in the silence of the night.[59]

Merton summarizes the elements of contemplation:

1. It is an intuition that on its lower level transcends the senses. On its higher level it transcends the intellect itself.

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[57] Ibid. p. 15.

[58] Stenqvist. Catharina. *Thomas Merton and his view on contemplation*. American Theological Library Association.

[59] Merton, Thomas. *Dancing in the Water of Life*. HarperOne. 1998. New York. p. 240.

2. Hence it is characterized by a quality of light in darkness, knowing in unknowing. It is beyond feeling, even beyond concepts.
3. In this contact with God, in darkness, there must be a certain activity of love on both sides. On the side of the soul, there must be a withdrawal from attachment to sensible things, a liberation of the mind and imagination from all strong emotional and passionate clinging to sensible realities.
4. Contemplation is the work of love, and the contemplative proves his love by leaving all things, even the most spiritual things, for God in nothingness, detachment and "night." But the deciding factor in contemplation is the free and unpredictable action of God. He alone can grant the gift of mystical grace and make Himself known by the secret, ineffable contact that reveals His presence in the depths of the soul.
5. This knowledge of God in unknowing is not intellectual, nor even in the strict sense affective. It is a work of interior union and of identification in divine charity.
6. Contemplation is a supernatural love and knowledge of God, simple and obscure, infused by Him into the summit of the soul, giving it a direct and experimental contact with Him.
7. Love is sufficient to itself, is its own end, its own merit, its own reward. It seeks no cause beyond itself and no fruit outside itself. The very act of loving is the greatest reward of love.
8. The experience of contemplative prayer, and the successive states of contemplation through which one passes, are all modified by the fact that the soul is passive, or partly passive, under the guidance of God.
9. Contemplation is the light of God playing directly upon the soul. The light of God affects that soul the way the light of the sun affects a diseased eye: it causes pain.

10. Infused contemplation, then, sooner or later, brings with it a terrible interior revolution. Gone is the sweetness of prayer. Meditation becomes impossible, even hateful. Liturgical functions seem to be an insupportable burden. The mind cannot think. The will seems unable to love. The interior life is filled with darkness and dryness, and pain. The soul is tempted to think that all is over and that, in punishment for its infidelities, all spiritual life has come to an end. It is very often here that souls called by God to contemplation, are repelled by this "hard saying," turn back and "walk no more with Him."
11. This testing of the individual may perhaps be intensified by institutional circumstance. When one is called into the darkness of contemplation, one is called to leave familiar and conventional patterns of thought and action, and to judge by an entirely new and hidden criterion: by the unseen light of the Holy Spirit.

    From this we can conclude that infused contemplation has a definitely positive element, dynamic, living, creative, transforming. It is a kind of interior revolution, drawing the soul inexplicably out of its normal routines of thought and desire to seek what cannot be thought and to grasp what lies beyond all desire.[60]

[60] Merton, Thomas. *The Inner Experience: Infused Contemplation (V).* Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust. pp. 63-66

V.

SPIRITUALITY CONNECTS US WITH OTHERS, BUILDING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNITIES

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the fifth dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: the power to connect us with others, building relationships, and communities. The relationships and communities that spirituality builds are extraordinary sources of happiness and greatness, that lead toward world peace.

This chapter has a huge impact on our lives: building relationships is crucial for our happiness. Building relationships helps us to be leaders, as leaders need to build relationships, communicate visions and missions, and promote leadership throughout the organization.

This chapter has a huge impact on nations and organizations: relationships help us build human capital, shared organizational knowledge; they help us build social capital, behaviors, institutions, commitment, trust, and the rule of law; relationships motivate us and help us build structural, renewal and process capital.

World peace results from our consciousness making us relational, generating feelings, values, and love, which lead us to build relationships, and communities, promoting social integration, social commitment, and social harmony.

Summary of the chapter

Any person can experience that consciousness leads to discovering the person's value, inspiring love among persons, and building relationships and communities.

Every act of consciousness we perform is "consciousness of" something or other: consciousness makes us relational. We give values to intentional feelings; we build values, love, interest, and attraction. Consciousness generates inter-subjectivity, builds relationships, integrates families, couples, and friendships, and helps people escape isolation.

Hinduist Dharma promotes a society based on spirituality, wisdom, duties, self-control, and harmony.

The Buddhist Sangha promotes a social organization based on reading, meditation, monastic rule, and social roles.

The Trinitarian God provides a model of society based on consciousness (the Father), understanding (the Son), loving (the Spirit), inspiring a loving community, a missionary community. We were created in the image and likeness of the Trinity, the foundation of our human community, with a social orientation, a community model with equality, inclusion, participation, hospitality, respecting diversity, and promoting unity.

The Holy Spirit participated in the creation of the world, fostered the leaders of the Old Testament, anointed Jesus in his mission during his baptism, drove Jesus to the desert to be tested, acted through Jesus in his mission, guided and led an expanding missionary Church; the Holy Spirit is the breath of God in the persons' and community lives.

The Bible promotes a communitarian mission, summarized in Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18-19. God was part of his people's lives and made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Prophets, and Jesus.

Saint Benedict's "Rule" helped structure a social organization that promotes peace, prayer, work, humility, charity, moderation, hearing, stability, and conversion. This led to preserving Western culture and creating a new civilization during the collapse of the Roman Empire. The Rule is based on spirituality; it starts presenting the foundations of the knowledge and will of a social organization: "Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy master and incline the ear of thy heart, and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father."[1]

Saint Francis presented a community model based on spirituality, promoting peacemaking and reconciliation, accepting poverty as creatures among creatures, and accepting failure and death.

Saint Thomas Aquinas described our life as a journey from God's love to God's love, with and toward a Trinitarian God, the human society in a journey to love.

Guardini believed in an interpersonal encounter with God, a dialogue, a relationship between two lovers, a spiritual journey based on an interpersonal experience between God and everyone, an experiential knowledge produced by the daily life experience, the contemplation of nature, the birth of a child, a thunderstorm, by the scriptures, by a Christian world view, with insights, perceptions, intuitions enriched by a personal dialogue with God. This helps build community, impacting each man and woman's lives, the Kingdom of God in humankind, and Christianity's epitome.

Wojtyła relied on spirituality to survive Nazism and Communism, building personal and community values to oppose the depersonalization, de-humanization of modern ideologies, stressing the value of the person and the community: spirituality leads to social action, participation, with a communitarian orientation.

[1] Benedict. The Holy Rule of St. Benedict.

The Hinduist Dharma. Wisdom promotes social harmony

K. R. Sundararajan[2] describes the famous story of a hero called Rama.

Rama was a divine being in human form, entrusted with defeating a powerful demon king. The story presents an ideal of social and familial behavior based on piety, spirituality. The story shows how the society works well, based on religious life, in which everyone practices their duties and self-control, and the king fosters such social order.

Such order is based on the Dharma, the cosmic harmony based on the people's non-interference, social harmony, and the proper behavior sustained by people's nature, as Rama exemplifies: an ideal son, husband, king, and friend. Dharma requires wisdom to harmonize the rights of all.

Arun Kumar Mookerjee[3] explains how Dharma means the law of human and non-human existence, "prescriptions, the observance of which keeps human beings from falling from the station of life or from their own true selves," protecting men from the evils created by them. Dharma is a way to attain material and spiritual value, preserving creation; Dharma is the way to acquire merit without wanting anything for one's own.

Dharma requires learning, asceticism, meditation, forgiveness, simplicity, kindness, truthfulness, and restraint: Dharma is the highest value.

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[2] Sundararajan, K. R. *The ideal of the perfect life: The Ramayana. Hindu Spirituality*. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Delhi. India. 1989. pp. 107-125

[3] Mookerjee, Arun Kumar. *Dharma as the goal: The Mahabharata.* Hindu Spirituality. Vedas Through Vedantas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Delhi. India. 1989. pp. 135-136

The Buddhist Sangha. A social organization based on meditation

The "Sangha" refers to the Buddhist community, the followers of the Buddha.

The Sangha, the Buddha, and the Dharma (teaching) are the "Threefold Refuge" of the Buddhists.

It involves those who live together, like monks, nuns, and those who live in the world, laymen and laywomen.

They go through an ordination ceremony, in which they shave their heads as a symbol of renunciation. They become wandering monks; in some cases, they live in monasteries; some practice agriculture for their living.

The Sangha's role is to facilitate the Buddhist's spiritual life, maintain the Buddha's original teachings, and teach its practice.

The Sangha is governed by a monastic rule and ethical precepts that the monks and nuns must follow. They dedicate most day and night to reading, meditation, chanting, and rituals; they practice fasting afternoon, celibacy, frugality in their lifestyle and possessions, and avoid the negative talk.

According to the Encyclopedia of Buddhism, "the Sangha has qualities of knowledge and liberation. Knowledge of: 1) the profound nature of phenomena, 2) the vast – phenomena in all their multiplicity, 3) discriminating awareness wisdom. Liberation of: 4) attachment, the emotional obscurations, 5) hindrance, the cognitive obscurations, 6) the inferior – the obscurations of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas."[4]

There is an interaction between the laymen and the monks and nuns: the former provides shelter, food, and clothes, and the latter provide spiritual guidance.

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[4] *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Sangha

The concept of Sangha has modernized. According to the Buddhist Centre:

> Buddhists around the world have set up a wide range of communal living situations with the aims of living simply, developing friendships with like-minded people, and supporting and encouraging each other's attempts to practice the Dharma.
>
> These Buddhist communities vary from a few friends informally sharing a house or apartment to larger or more intensive situations with regular periods of meditation, study, ritual, and community meetings. Community life is a practice in itself – learning to share, tolerating other people's habits and communicating honestly to resolve differences. It helps people to develop loving-kindness, loosen the divide between self and other, and gradually to realize the interconnected nature of life.
>
> There is also an environmental benefit because communal life is generally cheaper; people can live more frugally, split bills, and need, say, only one fridge, washing machine and so on, shared between half a dozen or a dozen people.[5]

A Trinitarian God. Consciousness, understanding, loving

The following reflections will rely on the insights proposed by Gilles Emery[6] and Anne Hunt,[7] among others.

The Trinity shows a communitarian God in a contemplative and relational state. The Father is infinitely happy in himself, expresses his happiness through the second person of the Trinity. The connection among them engenders an infinite love that is the Holy Spirit.

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[5] https://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/residential-community

[6] Emery, Gilles, OP. *The Trinitarian theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas.* Oxford University Press. 2007. New York.

[7] Hunt, Anne. *Trinity. Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith (Theology in Global Perspectives).* Orbis Books. Maryknoll. 2005. New York.

Pannenberg[8] explains how the Trinitarian community created the world: it is the work of the Father, reconciliation, and redemption by the Son, salvation, and consummation by the Spirit.

Dupuis[9] stresses the personal nature of God and the interpersonal relationship between the three. This way, he emphasizes a relational God. This is the foundation of a social organization.

Saint Augustine[10] introduced a psychological view of the Trinity that explains a contemplative God Father. He presents the Trinity as a "knowing and loving God," as the human person created in the image of God; he speaks of "memory, knowing and loving" God as "remembering, understanding, loving."

Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Summa continues with the psychological approach, consciousness, understanding, loving.

The mystic Hugh of Saint-Victor[11] writes how the Trinity continues with the psychological approach but focuses on the loving God. God is full of the highest virtue: charity.

Ruusbroec[12] continues with this psychological approach, emphasizing God as a whirlpool of love.

Moltmann,[13] a Protestant theologian, a former prisoner of war (WWII), reflects on God's emotional involvement with our lives: "If

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[8] Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*. Neuhaus, Westminster Press, 1969. Louisville, KY.

[9] Dupuis, Jacques. *Who do you say I am, introduction to Christology*. Maryknoll 1994. New York.

[10] Saint Augustine. *On the Trinity*. Translated by Rev. Arthur West Haddan. http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/augustine/On%20The%20Trinity%20-%20Augustine.pdf.

[11] St. Victor. *On the Trinity*. Translated by Jonathan Couser. https://pvspade.com/Logic/docs/StVictor.pdf.

[12] van Roosbroec, Jan. *The spiritual espousals*. Paulist press. 1981. New Jersey.

[13] Moltmann, Jurgen. *The crucified God, the Cross of Christ as the foundation and criticism of Christian theology*. Fortress Press. 1993. Minneapolis.

a person once feels the infinite passion of God's love (…) God suffers with us, from us, for us, this experience of God reveals a triune God."

A Trinitarian God inspires a loving community

The value of each Person of the Trinity participates to the dignity of each human being, created in the image and likeness of God, with a spiritual and immortal soul, able to understand the order of things established by the Creator and by free will capable of directing himself toward its proper good. The dignity of a man who has a vocation to divine beatitude is created rational and free, a subject with a moral conscience capable of doing good things. Each person is so important that God turned over his only Son for their salvation. Jesus' sacrifice of his life for humanity is a testimony to the dignity of each individual.

Loving one another is expressed in each Commandment and Beatitude. The Son incarnated to communicate to humanity the Trinitarian community. The Son sacrificed his life for his friends' love to save humanity; many symbols in the Bible express the community's value.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna presents the relational side of God of the Trinity as a model of social life:

> Living Trinitarian faith means living God's life: living from and for God, from and for others (…), means living together in harmony and communion with every other creature in the common household of God, adhering to the gospel of liberation from sin and fractured relationship.[14]

[14] Mowry LaCugna, Catherine. *God for us*. Harper. 1993. San Francisco.

For Bonaventure,[15] God is good, and as such, He is self-diffusive, self-communicative, and fecund, the fountain of plenitude, the first principle; the Son is self-expression; the Spirit is the Bond of Love.

John Zizioulas[16] considers that since God is relational, we should be so; since He is three persons in a community, we must be so.

A Trinitarian God promotes a missionary community

Rahner presents the Trinity with a missionary view:

> The psychological theory of the Trinity neglects the experience in the economy of salvation (…) the countenance of God which turns toward us in this self-communication, in the Trinitarian nature of this encounter, the very nature of God as he is in himself, must be if indeed the divine self-communication in grace and in glory really is the communication of God in his own self to us.[17]

Boff[18] presents a missionary view of the Trinity in terms of a social program. The Trinity is a community of coequal subjects characterized by relationality and mutuality, equal in dignity, and the reciprocity of love and life. As a social community model with equality, inclusion, participation, hospitality, respecting and protecting diversity and unity.

For Miroslav Volf:

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[15] Kenan, Osborne. "Bonaventure, mystery of a Triune God." *New Catholic Encyclopedia.*

[16] Zizioulas, John. *Being as communion: studies in personhood and the Church.* St Vladimirs Seminary Pr. 1997.

[17] Rahner, Karl. *Remarks on the dogmatic treatise "De Trinitate."* Theological investigations. Darton, Longman and Todd. 1966. London.

[18] Boff, Leonardo. *Trinity and Society. Trinity in systemic theology: perspectives from liberation theology. Holy Trinity, perfect community*. Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2000. New York.

> The Trinity as our social vision means that our social practices image the Triune God's coming down in the self-emptying passion in order to take human beings into their perfect cycle of exchanges in which they give themselves to each other and receive themselves back ever anew in love.[19]

Michael Downey provides a profound view of Trinitarian spirituality, which is enlightening:

> "The Father as the originator and pure source of love, Jesus Christ as the ongoing and inexhaustible activity of that love, drawing everything and everyone back to the origin and end of love in the bonding of love itself." Jesus speaks the very truth of the Giver, Giving and Gifting which is love itself. By the Spirit who is gift, dwelling within our hearts, we behold the mystery of the Trinity. Prayer is well thought of us awakening to the divine presence in every dimension of everyday life. A Trinitarian approach to prayer highlights the communal, social and indeed public character of all prayer. [20]

Hans Urs Von Balthasar[21] considers that the way to approach the Trinity is not rational but spiritual, an adoration act. Jesus' life as part of the Trinity is something to contemplate.

The Trinity as a whole paradigm of how everyone is meant to live in community is an essential part of their reality: a relational, pluralistic, interpersonal life, sharing compassion, justice, to establish his kingdom.

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[20] Downey, Michael. *Altogether gift, a Trinitarian spirituality*. Maryknoll. 2000. New York.

[21] von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *The Glory of the Lord, a theological aesthetics*. Ignatius press, 1982.

The Holy Spirit: the soul of a social organization, to build, inspire, heal

Joao Paulo de Mendonca Dantas[22] presents the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Church. According to him, this view has its origins in the Patristic and has evolved through the centuries in which the parallel with the person's body and soul is reflected in the Church and the Holy Spirit. The Church is not just a human organization with members and authorities: with the Holy Spirit, the Church is a spiritual community with life, energy, mission.

Ives Congar[23] has a similar view: the Spirit builds the Church, is the principle of communion, universality, holiness.

Congar introduces the Holy Spirit's role in the Old and New Testament, stressing the Holy Spirit's role on humanity, the persons, and communities: the Spirit is the breath of God in the persons' lives and communities.

Congar starts by investigating the scriptures focusing on three topics: the "breath of Yahweh" in the Old Testament, the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life, and the active role of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection, especially the role of the Spirit in the Church.

Congar states that Isaiah prophesized the role of the Spirit in Jesus messianic journey:

- Isaiah 11:2. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness.

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[22] de Mendonca Dantas, Joao Paulo. *Lo Spirito Santo "anima" del Corpo Mistico. Rdici storiche ed esempi scelti dell' ecclesiologia pneumatologica contemporanea*. Eupress FTL. Edizioni Cantagalli. 2017. Italy.

[23] Congar, Ives. *I believe in the holy Spirit*. The Crossroad publishing company. Herder. 2015. New York.

- Isaiah 42:1. Behold my servant, I will uphold him: my elect, my soul delighteth in him: I have given my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.
- Isaiah 61:1-3. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me: he hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort all that mourn: To appoint to the mourners of Sion, and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief: and they shall be called in it the mighty ones of justice, the planting of the Lord to glorify hint.

Congar states that the New Testament reinforces the role of the Spirit in Jesus messianic role:

- Matthew 1:20. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.
- Matthew 28:19-20. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.
- Luke 4:1-2. Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the desert, For the space of forty days; and was tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry.
- Luke 4:18-19. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he

hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, To preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward.

- John 16:12-15. I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak; and the things that are to come, he shall shew you. He shall glorify me; because he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it to you. All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine. Therefore I said, that he shall receive of mine, and shew it to you.
- John 20:21-23. He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.
- Acts 13:2. And as they were ministering to the Lord, and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them: Separate me Saul and Barnabas, for the work whereunto I have taken them.
- Acts 20:28. Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
- Galatians 5:18. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law.

Congar presents several passages showing the Holy Spirit as helper, advocate, redeemer, and savior:

- John 14:15-18. If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him: but you shall know him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.
- John 14:26. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.
- John 15:26. But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.
- John 16:7. But I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.
- Ephesians 4:30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God: whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.
- Ephesians 6:17. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).

The missionary role of the Holy Spirit in the community

The Holy Spirit is an energizing force, source of life, creation, and creativity, giving love, joy, mercy, forgiveness, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, freedom. The Spirit infuses his gifts, understanding, skills, power to bring peace, justice.

The Holy Spirit participated in the creation of the world, fostered the leaders of the Old Testament, anointed Jesus in his mission during his baptism, drove Jesus to the desert to be tested, to experience conflict and temptation, as part of his mission, it acted through Jesus

in his mission: "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God; To comfort all who mourn" (Isaiah 61:1).

Thiselton[24] presents similar views as Congar and Mendonca Dantas, explaining how the Holy Spirit had a missionary role given to each of the Old Testament leaders. The Spirit infuses his gifts, understanding, skills, power, to bring peace, justice.

According to Thiselton, the Spirit was present in Jesus' mission:

- The Holy Spirit anoints Jesus in his mission during his baptism: "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.' (Mark. 1:9-11). "'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, 'Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Luke 4:18-21).
- The Spirit drives Jesus to the desert to be tested, to experience conflict and temptation, as part of his mission. "Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was

[24] Thiselton, Anthony C. A *Shorter Guide to the holy Spirit. Bible, doctrine, experience*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2016. Michigan.

led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2). When the devil leaves Jesus: "Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee" (Luke 4:14).

- In his mission, the Spirit acts through Jesus: "It is by the power of the Spirit that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Matthew 12:28).
- The Spirit leads people to intimacy with God: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:15-17).
- Jesus transmits his mission to his disciples in the name of the Trinity: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19); "[Jesus] said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained'" (John 20:21-23).
- The Spirit guide people in difficult times: "When they lead you away and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. But say whatever will be given to you at that hour. For it will not be you who are speaking but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11).

According to Thiselton, the Acts of the Apostles show an active Holy Spirit as a guide and leader of an expanding missionary Church:

- During Pentecost, the apostles gathered at the Cenacle "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim" (Acts 2:4); Peter stated: "God says, 'that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18); "Peter [said] to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).
- The public descent of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritans: "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).
- Peter refuses to impose the Mosaic law on the Gentiles as God bestowed the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household without preconditions concerning the adoption of the Mosaic law: "After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to them, 'My brothers, you are well aware that from early days God made his choice among you that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them the Holy Spirit just as he did us.'" (Acts 15:7-8); "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities" (Acts 15:28).

In summary, understanding the Holy Spirit is an extraordinary road to understanding what spirituality is, its missionary role.

The covenant between God and his people throughout the Bible

John Bergsma presents the entire Bible as a series of covenants, defined as kinships by an oath: God wants us to be his family. As Bergsma states:

- The Adamic covenant: God made Adam his son (Genesis 1:26; 5:3, made Adam in his "image" and "likeness"), king (Genesis 1:26 "dominion"), priest (Genesis 2:15 "work" and "guard"), prophet (Genesis 2:19-20), bridegroom (Genesis 2:23-25).
- The Noahic covenant: after Adam's fall, his sonship was restored (Genesis 8:2–9:17).
- The Abrahamic covenant God promised: "I will make you a great nation" (Genesis 12:2), "I will make your name great" (Genesis 12:2), "Through you all nations will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). And God made his covenant: "I have sworn… because you have not withheld your only begotten son, I will surely bless you… And by your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:16-18).
- The Mosaic covenant: after a new fall (the golden calf, Exodus 32), God renews his covenant (Exodus 34); after more falls in the wilderness (Numbers), God renews his covenant again (Deuteronomy).
- The Davidic covenant: God announces that David's son will be the King, the Son of God (2 Samuel 7:14), the King will build the temple (2 Samuel 7:13), the King will rule the whole world (Psalms 2:8; 89:25-27).

- The covenants with the prophets: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David" (Isaiah 55:3). "I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I will make with them a covenant of peace, that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods" (Ezekiel 34:24-25).
- Jesus comes to fulfill all the covenants: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham; Jesus a new Moses (bread from heaven), Jesus a new David. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).[25]

Saint Benedict: spirituality helps to build a social organization, to preserve the Western culture, creating a new civilization during the collapse of the Roman Empire

Saint Benedict was the father of Western monasticism. As a young man, he abandoned his studies in Rome to live his Christianity, searching for peace and identity. He went to the mountain at Subiaco, in which Romanus, a hermit monk, guided him to start a life of contemplation, in isolation, in poverty, in a cave, for three years. Many came to him for guidance, so he founded twelve monasteries in the valley, with twelve monks each.

[25] Bergsma, Dr. John S. How to Get Through the Bible in an Hour: Teaching the "Big Picture" of Salvation History. Franciscan University of Steubenville. Extracted from: https://www.johnbergsma.com/excerpts-outlines

These monasteries expanded in Europe and were the fortress that rebuilt the Western civilization from the Roman Empire's collapse and defended it during the following centuries.

A spirituality for the new social organization: humility, charity, moderation, hearing, stability, conversion

Benedict's spirituality and wisdom were sources of support and salvation for Western civilization in his time and perennial youth and vigor. He adapted oriental monasticism to the West: a balanced cenobitic life with no undue austerity or severity. It involved a balance of prudence and simplicity, humility with the practice of virtue, moderation in eating, drinking, sleeping, reading, working, and praying. All could become saints, especially by the royal way of charity. Monastic stability, manual labor, study in a family context. The principal care is the common praise of God, constant prayer, during work, reading, by raising our minds to Christ in perfect love. Earthly things are incapable of satisfying the heart, maximizing the love of Christ, from which flows charity to our neighbor, the poor, the sick, the guests.

As Christine Valters Paintner[26] explains the three primary commitments in the Benedictine life:

> Obedience means "to hear," it is a commitment to listen for God's voice in the world and respond when you hear the call. Stability for monastics means making a commitment to a particular monastery for a lifetime, a commitment to be present to life circumstances even through challenges. Conversion means making a commitment to always be surprised by God, on a journey

[26] Valters Paintner, Christine. How Benedict's Rule can guide your spiritual practice. Benedictine wisdom helps us become monks in the world. Extracted from http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201908/how-benedicts-rule-can-guide-your-spiritual-practice-31792

> and always changing, as God is always offering us something new within us.[27]

What can we learn from this experience? How did spirituality influence the lives of men and women who lived in these monasteries? How did this preserve a Western culture from collapse? How Benedict proposed a life model that generated peace in the middle of chaos, that generated a new civilization?

The "Rule" to structure a social organization: peace, pray, and work

He wrote his famous Rule to regulate the lives of the laymen in the monasteries. This required living their domestic lives filled with spirituality, intending to love God, living in the presence of God, in work, community, the liturgy, a balance between prayer and work, the readings of the scriptures, promoting purity of heart, moderation, asceticism, obedience, poverty, and humility.

Thomas Merton explained:

> The three essential dimensions of the Rule: it is moderate; it is flexible; it is a spiritual document, not a legal one.
>
> It is, in other words, dedicated to the maintenance of a set of values, not to the preservation of a set of arcane behaviors.
>
> It sets out to teach seekers how to live the ordinary life extraordinarily well. It does not pretend to turn humans into angels; it sets out to help average human beings become fully human by helping them to become fully spiritual as well.
>
> It teaches the spirituality of the presence of God and that changes everything in life.

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[27] Ibid.

It is a document written by a lay man for a lay community.[28]

The knowledge and will of a social organization

The Prologue of the Rule starts with: "Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy master, and incline the ear of thy heart, and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father."

The rule displays a great moderation, reasonability, away from extremes, excesses: work is a means to the goodness of life; their monastic life is centrally social, communitarian, work, and pray and eat together, equality. The prayer is based on Psalms and Canticles, organized in different hours throughout the day in the "Liturgy of the Hours."

Benedict rule proposes the following values:

- Love of Christ and Neighbor. Benedictine life, like that of all Christians, is first and foremost a response to God's astonishing love for humankind, a love expressed in the free gift of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ Love tops St Benedict's list of tools for good works.
- Prayer. Cultivate a fundamental attentiveness to the ways by which God is present in the human mind and heart and, indeed, in all creation. St Benedict directed that nothing is to be preferred to prayer. Lectio divina is the slow meditative reading of scriptures and other sacred texts with the intention of discerning how God is at work right now in the world and calling within the individual's own heart.
- Stability. Stability shapes a Benedictine way of life. All commit themselves to seeking God. They resolve to pursue this,

[28] Merton, Thomas. *The Rule of Saint Benedict. Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 4*. Cistercian Publications. www.cistercianpublications.org Liturgical Press. www.litpress.org Preface. Collegeville, Minnesota. 2009. p. ix

their heart's deepest desire, together, day in and day out, in good times and in bad, throughout the span of their lives.

- Conversatio. The Benedictine word "conversatio" means the process of letting go of self-centered preoccupations and false securities so that the divine life at the core of one's being becomes manifest in a trustworthy pattern of living.
- Obedience. Benedict begins the Rule with the exhortation "Listen," emphasizing the stance required of all who seek wisdom. Obedience is putting into practice what is learned by listening to the other "with the ear of the heart."
- Discipline. Benedictine life is built around a fundamental discipline of prayer, work, and relationships, seeking to free people to take delight in God's presence within the self, the community, and the world.
- Humility. The Benedictine way of life seeks an accurate knowledge of self, a pervasive awareness of God's presence and dependence on others and creation itself. Benedictines recognize their limitations without losing hope and accept their gifts without becoming arrogant because the measure of their lives is not found in themselves alone.
- Stewardship. At its core the Rule seeks to foster a fundamental reverence toward the creation that God has made. St Benedict exhorts his followers to regard all the tools and goods of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar.
- Hospitality. St Benedict accords special attention to Christ's unexpected arrival in the person of the guest, whom he describes alternately as poor and as a stranger. A blessing accompanies both the offering and the receiving of hospitality.
- Community. The Benedictine community is rooted in a particular place in which mutual service, especially in mundane everyday life, is demanded of all with no expectation of individual reward. It is a challenge to contribute to a living, flesh-

and-blood community on such terms. The monk above all else is a peacemaker.

- Justice and Peace. Benedictine life aims to find peace. We must pursue it and work for it. It is an active ordering of life so that peace is the outcome. Peace is a feature of just communities – for peace to reign, justice is fundamental.[29]

The heart of the social organization: humility, the road to contemplation and charity

Thomas Merton describes how "the longest" and "most important" chapter of the Rule, chapter 7 on humility, is both the culmination of Benedictine asceticism and the foundation for genuine contemplation:

> Here we have for Saint Benedict the real interior life of the monk. Hence this section of the Rule is of the greatest importance. Nothing is equal to it in the whole teaching of Saint Benedict. This is, in a nutshell, the whole of the monastic life. The degrees of humility are a summary of the active life which prepares us for contemplation which is hinted at as the chapter ends.
>
> For Saint Benedict, "the essence of pride lies in exalting ourselves above others, giving ourselves an exaggerated preference, imagining we are vastly greater than we actually are, or than others are."
>
> Because it is built on illusion, pride inevitably breeds insecurity, a constant desire to be affirmed in our own falsehood, whether that desire is expressed in an aggressive desire to control others, in constant criticism and jealousy of others, or in "the virulent form of pride that is hidden under the apparently sweet

[29] Adapted from Association of Benedictine Colleges & Universities Statement. *The Ten Hallmarks of Benedictine Education. Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition*. Revised August 27, 2007. Source: www.abcu.info

and humble, apparently self-deprecating exterior of so many of us in this country" who want to be liked, accepted, affirmed by everyone.

Such efforts, whatever form they may take, involve an "immense waste of energy" in one struggling "to manipulate reality and make things come out in accord with his illusions about himself."

Humility is only restoring the right order and truth, in contrast, facing and accepting reality, above all the reality of one's own common humanity, brings relief and rest.[30]

Benedict proposed twelve degrees of humility, the ladder of humility, is the road to contemplation, leading the monk from a salutary fear of the Lord to a charity which casts out fear altogether[31]:

1. The first degree of humility, then, is that a man always has the fear of God before his eyes, motivated above all by a sense of the continual presence of God.
2. The second degree of humility is, when a man loves not his own will, nor is pleased to fulfill his own desires but by his deeds carried out that word of the Lord, making what is good in itself or good for others.
3. For the love of God a man subject himself to a Superior in all obedience, imitating the Lord with his Father, life of imitation of Christ.
4. If hard and distasteful things are commanded, nay, even though injuries are inflicted, he accepts them with patience and even temper, it is this superficial and worldly identity that

[30] O'Connell, Patrick F. The Rule of Saint Benedict Initiation into the Monastic Tradition by Thomas Merton. Cistercian Publications. www.cistercianpublications.org Liturgical Press. Collegeville, Minnesota www.litpress.org

[31] Ibid.

must be renounced, becoming sharply aware of the distinction between the illusory "persona" created by one's own desires and fears and "the true person of a man, his inner spiritual self, [which] is not affected by insults and lack of consideration."

5. One hides from his Abbot none of the evil thoughts which rise in his heart or the evils committed by him in secret, but humbly confesses them, putting aside all fear of being known for what we are, of being known by another as we know ourselves, the good points and the bad points, without glossing things over, without ambiguities.
6. When a man is content with the meanest and worst of everything, and in all that is enjoined him holds himself as a bad and worthless workman, it is not only a way of being detached from one's own will but a way of sharing the lot of those on the margins of society, it is the humility of a man of virtue who has altogether ceased to attach any importance to his virtue, it is even the surrender of the desire for consolations.
7. When, not only with his tongue he declares, but also in his inmost soul believeth, that he is the lowest and vilest of men, humbling himself, the humble man does not regard himself as the last in a collection of criminals but the last in a community of saints.
8. When a man does nothing but what is sanctioned by the common rule of the monastery and the example of his elders, with willingness to share fully the ordinary lives of one's brothers.
9. When a man withholds his tongue from speaking and keeping silence doth not speak until he is asked, an eloquent expression of the interior peace and tranquility of a soul united to God.
10. When a man is not easily moved and quick for laughter.

11. When a man speaks, he speaks gently and without laughter, humbly and with gravity, with few and sensible words, and that he be not loud of voice.
12. When a man is not only humble of heart, but always lets it appear also in his whole exterior to all that see him; namely, at the Work of God, in the garden, on a journey, in the field, or wherever he may be, sitting, walking, or standing, let him always have his head bowed down, his eyes fixed on the ground, ever holding himself guilty of his sins, thinking that he is already standing before the dread judgment seat of God, and always saying to himself in his heart what the publican in the Gospel said, with his eyes fixed on the ground: "Lord, I am a sinner and not worthy to lift up mine eyes to heaven" (Luke 18:13). A man is everywhere just as quiet and collected as he is at prayer.[32]

Saint Francis. The relationship with God creates and transforms communities

A relationship with God promotes creating relationships among all persons, communities under the same God.

Judeo-Christians pray to a loving God that recognizes each person's value and the community, who fosters love, the core of community building.

Joan Mueller[33] presents the case of Saint Francis, a saint known by Christians and non-Christians for his peacemaking, how his spirituality is guidance for peacemaking. Mueller explains how sharing a common God builds a community:

[32] Saint Benedict. *Rules*.

[33] Mueller, Joan. "Franciscan reconciliation. The struggle to embrace Joy." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters.

> In the 'Mirror of Perfection' Francis […] does not speak of a spirit of the community which forms the behavior of the Friars, but rather emphasizes person gifts: 'the perfect faith and love of poverty of Brother Bernard; the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo; the courtesy of Brother Angelo; the gracious look and natural good sense of Brother Masseo; the mind upraised to God possessed in its highest perfection by Brother Giles; the virtuous and constant prayer of Brother Rufino; the patience of Brother Juniper; the bodily and spiritual courage of Brother John; the charity of Brother Roger; and the caution of Brother Lucidus'.[34]

Mueller summarizes her conclusions with the following statements:

> Those who feel called to live a spirituality of peacemaking and reconciliation in the spirit of Saint Francis within a violent world, may be guided by three summary observations.
>
> First, Francis engages in the work of peacemaking and reconciliation. He embraces the leper, risks his life to meet the Sultan, mediates between the podestà and the bishop, etc. Dialogue, nonviolent intervention and common sense are core to a spirituality of peacemaking and reconciliation. Those who shun processes of mediation and dialogue fail to understand Francis' example.
>
> Second, Francis' voluntary poverty is a reconciling element. Persons not blinded by greed appreciate their place as creatures among creatures. Material and spiritual poverty renders followers of Francis available to others and to God, and prevents them from being a stumbling block to the poor. Those who treasure poverty embrace the poor, crucified Christ more and more completely in order to effect in their own lives the joy of having nothing other than God.

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[34] Ibid. p. 41.

> Finally, human works of peacemaking and reconciliation are not always successful. Followers of Saint Francis understand that contemplative union with the crucified Christ in waiting and prayer is core to effective reconciliation. […] Knowing that the glory of reconciliation flows from the failure of Calvary, Franciscans offer their attempts at reconciliation and then surrender everything at the foot of the cross.[35]

Saint Thomas Aquinas. Our journey from, with, and toward a Trinitarian God

As Torrell explains, Thomas presents a fresh approach to Neoplatonism, we were created by God, and we journey toward God:

> In the exit of creatures from the First Principle, we observe a kind of circular movement owing to the fact that all things return as to their end to that from which they came forth as their Beginning.[36]

According to Torrell, such process is led by the Trinity: God created the world to communicate his goodness, his perfection; the incarnation of the Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit led our salvation to return to God. God marked the creatures with his beauty; all creatures have a resemblance of the Trinity:

> On all creatures there is a representation of the Trinity in a vestigial mode, in the sense that we find in each of them something that we must necessarily refer to the divine persons as its cause…

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[35] Ibid. p. 47.

[36] Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Sentences d. 14 q. 2 a. 2.* Quoted by Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

> Indeed, insofar as it is a substance, a creature represents its cause and principle and thus manifests the Father, Beginning without beginning. Inasmuch as it has a certain form and species, the creature represents the Word, for the form of the work comes from the artisan who conceived it. Finally, insofar as it is ordered to other realities, the creature represents the Holy Spirit as love, for the orientation of one thing to another is the effect of the creative will.[37]
>
> So long, therefore, as a thing possesses being, God must be present in it, and in conformity with the way in which it possesses being. Now, being in each thing is the most intimate and deepest thing it possesses, since being plays a role in everything that is in it, the role of form, of the determining principle… We must, therefore, necessarily conclude from this that God is in all things in the most intimate way.[38]

The impact of the Trinity in our communitarian life. Human society in a journey to love

The origin of why creatures are called to become a community starts on the Trinity.

Torrell explains Thomas crucial intuitions regarding the Trinity that provide a new understanding of the creation, of our lives in community, based on the Trinitarian community of love:

> The Father has done all things through the Son, bestowing each of love's effects on the creatures; the Holy Spirit, who is the Love

[37] *ST Ia q. 45 a.* 7. Ibid.
[38] *ST Ia q. 8 a. 1*. Ibid.

> by which the Father loves the Son, is also the Love by which He loves the creature and imparts to it His perfection.[39]

In other words, the creation was originated by a community of love:

> The Love with which the Father loves the Son and the Son the Father, we are loved with the love with which God loves Himself.
>
> Since all things return, as to their end, to the Principle from which they issued, we must expect that this return toward the end reaches completion according to the same causes as its exit from the Principle.
>
> Just as we have been created through the Son and through the Holy Spirit, just so is it through them that we are united to our final end.[40]

As Torrell explains, this describes our entire journey, a journey that starts on love and goes toward love. As the Son is God's wisdom, and the Holy Spirit is God's love, our life is full of both. Therefore, we reach to a central conclusion: the foundation of our human community is knowledge and love, in reflection of the knowledge and love of the Trinity.

As Torrell states:

> Thomas views present a model of society, in a journey. We know what the teaching of Thomas on the human being as the image of God consists of. He addressed it several times and, from the Sentences Commentary to the Summa, his thinking evolved noticeably. To sum up briefly, we can say that, relying on both the

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[39] Torrell O.P., Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Volume 2. Spiritual Master. Translated by Robert Royal. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. 2003. p. 176

[40] Ibid. p. 177

> Bible and the Aristotelian principle that every effect resembles its cause, Thomas concludes that we find a vestige (or trace) of the Trinity in all of creation. The human being also participates in this dignity of being a "vestige," but, more than that, he is an image in the proper sense of the word, and, more precisely, he is an image of the Trinity, for it is only in persons endowed with intellect and freedom that we find a begotten word and a love that proceeds.[41]

The Holy Spirit as the bond of love

According to Torrell, Thomas provides a new extraordinary understanding of the Holy Spirit as love:

> We must say that the Holy Spirit is the link (nexus) between the Father and the Son, insofar as He is Love. Indeed, it is through a unique lovingkindness that the Father loves both Himself and the Son—and vice versa; it follows that, insofar as He is Love, the Holy Spirit evokes a reciprocal connection between the Father and the Son, a connection of lover to beloved. But by the same fact that Father and Son love each other, it is necessary that their mutual love, otherwise known as the Holy Spirit, proceed from the one and the other. If we then consider the origin, the Holy Spirit is not in the middle: he is the Third Person of the Trinity. But if we consider the mutual connection of which we have just spoken, then, yes, he is between the two other persons as the link who unites them, proceeding from each of them.[42]

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41 Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011. p. 115.

42 *ST Ia q. 37 a.1 ad 3.* Quoted by Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

The Holy Spirit is a bond between Christ as the Head and we as the faithful members, as Thomas explains:

> In the natural body, the faculties distributed in all the members differ numerically according to their essence, but they are joined in their root, which is numerically one and, further, they possess a single final form.
>
> Similarly, all the members of the Mystical Body have as their final perfection the Holy Spirit who is numerically one in all. And charity itself, spread among them by the Holy Spirit, though different according to essence in the diversity of persons, is nonetheless united in its root and numerically one, for the specific root of an operation is the object itself from which it receives its specification. And that is why, as all believe in and love one and the same object, the faith and charity of all are united in one and the same root, not only in their initial root, which is the Holy Spirit, but also in their near root, which is their proper object.[43]

Love is what bonds all together in a community:

> It is the unity of charity, given that all those who live in charity form as it were a single body. Such that the good of one flows upon all, in the way that the hand or some other member is at the service of the whole body. It is thus that all good achieved by one is of value for each of those who live in charity, according to the expression in the Psalm (118:63): "I am the companion of whoever fears you and keeps your commandments."[44]

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[43] *In III Sent. d. 13 q. 2 a. 2 qc. 2 ad 1.* Quoted by Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

[44] *Quodl. II, q. 7 a. 2 [14].* Quoted by Torrell, O.P. Jean-Pierre. Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic University of America Press. Washington, D.C. Translated by Bernhard Blankenhorn. 2011

Romano Guardini. A Trinitarian spirituality to build a living community, the Kingdom of God

Guardini emphasizes the central and critical role of the Church in building community. For him, after centuries of individualism, the Church has been delegated to a secondary role: like an external thing, a formal and legal institution that restricts people's lives, their freedom, sets boundaries, is even oppressive.

For Guardini, today the Church is not considered as a living body, a living community in which all persons participate their lives, contribute with their creativity, energy, life; the others are not considered real brothers; the members do not feel any passion for the community, they do not have consciousness of interdependence or solidarity.

How does this community impact the lives of each man and woman? According to Guardini:

> The Church is the Kingdom of God in mankind, the epitome of Christianity, all that Christ was, all that He taught, did, created, and suffered, is contained in these words. The Kingdom of God means that the Creator takes possession of His creature, penetrates it with His light; He fills its will and heart with His own burning love and the root of its being with His own divine peace, and He molds the entire spirit by the creative power which imposes a new form upon it. The Kingdom of God means that God draws His creature to Himself, and makes it capable of receiving His own fullness.[45]

[45] Guardini, Romano. *The Church and the Catholic*. Translated by Ada Lane. Sheed & Ward Inc., New York. 1935. p. 39.

According to Guardini, the Church as a community and the persons must realize the Kingdom of God and interdependence between the person and the community, between self-consciousness and the sense of organic life, leading to harmony and perfection.

Guardini stresses the human dimension of the Christian community:

> To be truly human is to be conscious of human weakness, but confident that it can be overcome. It is to be humble, but assured. It is to realize man's transience, but aspire to the eternal. It is to be a prisoner of time, but a freeman of eternity. It is to be aware of one's powers, of one's limitations, but to be resolved to accomplish deeds of everlasting worth. A man is human in so far as he lives, consciously, willingly, and with a cheerful promptitude as a finite being in the midst of time, change, and the countless shapes of life--but at the same time strives to overcome all this flux and limitation in the eternity, and infinity, which transfigure them, a mystery pregnant with pain and strength, desire and confident hope.[46]
>
> The Church confronts man with a world of absolute values, an essential pattern of unconditional perfection, an order of life whose features bear the stamp of truth. It is the Person of Christ It is the structure of values and standards which He personified and taught.[47]
>
> This community is an infinite life, everything is in common, life, power, truth, a community of responsibility and destiny. The prayer of my fellows, their works, their growth in grace and purity are mine also. One man transmits to another not only the force of example, speech and instruction, not only the superflux of grace and the efficacy of prayer and intercession, but also the

[46] Ibid. p. 84.
[47] Ibid. p. 91.

> power of suffering, suffering becomes a life-giving and redeeming force for those for whom it has been offered up.[48]
>
> The Father bestows all things upon the Son, and Father and Son all things upon the Holy Ghost, we all possess the same God as to every man He gives Himself and His entire self. In God we are all one, God belongs to all, but to each in a unique fashion, a profound communal solidarity unites all the members of the Church, but in it the person is never swallowed up in a featureless identity, we experience the meaning of community. A profound reverence for human personality will govern everything.[49]

Guardini followed Augustine and Bonaventure's insights. Knowledge is based on inductive or experiential reasoning and the role of intuitions. He believed in love's primacy over knowledge, a philosophy based on love, not on intellect. The Trinity models the person's role as part of a community: God's emanates love toward the creatures and man, man emanates love toward the creatures and God; God illuminates the persons, their knowledge.

To re-integrate knowledge and acquire an integral view of man, Guardini proposes to develop a personal relationship with Christ.

Guardini uses the word "weltanschauung," which means "intuition, vision, contemplation," as a cognitive approach to know the universal reality, which incorporates values, judgment, life, a contemplative view that involves the totality of man. Christ has such authentic weltanschauung. How is it possible to have a universal integrated view if each person has a different perspective, different psychology, different culture? How can society move from modern pervasive individualism and collectivism? Is it reasonable to try to integrate such diversity? Who has the perspective of Christ?

For Guardini, the response is: the Church. The Church welcomes the diversity of each person as contributing to her wealth. The

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[48] Ibid. p. 159.

[49] Ibid. p. 161.

Church does not eliminate personal freedom; she promotes the plenitude of each person. Paul, Francis, Thomas, Ignatius, Bonaventure are all different, but they all reflect Christ's views, which is the Church's wealth.

Robert Krieg[50] explains how God self-discloses himself, based on Guardini's book "Die Offenbarung" (Revelation), through an interpersonal encounter with God, a dialogue, a relationship between two lovers, following Martin Buber I-Thou interpersonal relationship. Guardini expressed during his conversion on the discovery of God's nearness, a sense of presence, and caring with God. He identifies himself with Saint Augustine's spiritual journey, his conversion toward a mature Christian faith, based on an interpersonal experience between God and everyone.

Krieger explains that such an interpersonal relationship, spiritual journey, experiential knowledge is produced by the daily life experience, the contemplation of nature, the birth of a child, a thunderstorm, by the scriptures, by a Christian world view, with insights, perceptions, intuitions enriched by a personal dialogue with God.

For Krieger, this helps build community, impacting each man and woman's lives, the Kingdom of God in humankind, and Christianity's epitome.

> God belongs to all, but to each in a unique fashion, a profound communal solidarity unites all the members of the Church, we experience the meaning of community. A profound reverence for human personality will govern everything.[51]
>
> The Creator takes possession of His creature, penetrates it with His light; He fills its will and heart with His own burning love and the root of its being with His own divine peace, and He

[50] Krieg, Robert A. *Romano Guardini, a precursor of Vatican II*. University of Notre Dame Press. Indiana. 1997.

[51] Guardini, Romano. *The Church and the Catholic*. Translated by Ada Lane. Sheed & Ward Inc. 1935. New York. p. 161.

> molds the entire spirit by the creative power which imposes a new form upon it. The Kingdom of God means that God draws His creature to Himself, and makes it capable of receiving His own fullness.[52]
>
> To be truly human is to be conscious of human weakness, but confident that it can be overcome. It is to be aware of one's powers, of one's limitations, but to be resolved to accomplish deeds of everlasting worth.[53]

For Guardini, human frailty unveils the need for a community to realize the Kingdom of God and interdependence between the person and the community, between self-consciousness and the sense of organic life, leading to harmony and perfection of each person.

> This community is an infinite life, everything is in common, life, power, truth, a community of responsibility and destiny. The prayer of my fellows, their works, their growth in grace and purity are mine also. One man transmits to another not only the force of example, speech and instruction, not only the superflux of grace and the efficacy of prayer and intercession, but also the power of suffering, suffering becomes a life-giving and redeeming force for those for whom it has been offered up.[54]

According to Guardini, the Church as a community and the persons are required for the perfect realization of the Kingdom of God, and interdependence between the person and the community, between self-consciousness and the sense of organic life, leading to harmony and perfection of each person.

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[52] Ibid. p. 39.
[53] Ibid. p. 84.
[54] Ibid. p. 159.

Wojtyła. The de-humanization, de-personalization of modernity

Poland lived under Nazi and Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1945, and under a totalitarian communist regime until 1989. Wojtyła had a central role in the collapse of communism, the fall of Berlin's wall.

As Pawel Tarasiewicz summarizes:

> There is no doubt that Wojtyła was always aware of the danger of collectivism, which in all its forms does make a horrible mistake of depriving man of his substantial status and treating him as an accidental part of the social whole. His contribution in recapitulating the sacred mystery of the person culminated in his personalism tightly integrated with realist metaphysics and ethics.[55]

As Wojtyła stated:

> The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person. To this disintegration planned at times by atheistic ideologies we must oppose, rather than sterile polemics, a kind of 'recapitulation' of the inviolable mystery of the person.[56]

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[55] Tarasiewicz, Pawel. "The common sense personalism of St. John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła)." *Studia Gilsoniana*. 2014. John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Poland. p. 623.

[56] Weigel, George. *John Paul II and the Crisis of Humanism*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, Cambridge. p. 116.

Wojtyła's Personalism. Spirituality, consciousness, to discover the value of the person, values, transcendence

As George F. McLean explains, Wojtyła was introduced to "phenomenology and the turn inward to the subject to complement modern times' rationalism and even the realist objectivism of the Scholastic tradition."[57]

Peter J. Colosi explains how, for Wojtyła, phenomenology leads to build love among persons:

> Love is the epistemological vehicle through which we know the uniqueness of others. Not only the intellect, however, but also the heart, or the feelings, have a cognitive dimension. And it is only through loving another person that his or her uniqueness is known or encountered by us.[58]

According to McLean:

> Fabro was open to phenomenology and the philosophy of spirit and consciousness in a way that a Thomism based in matter and physical change was not […] Augustine pointed inward to human consciousness in search of the Spirit. He did so in ways more similar to the Eastern religious traditions than to Aristotle's physics. This marked the character of Christian philosophy

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[57] McLean O.M.I., George F. *Karol Wojtyła's Mutual Enrichment of the Philosophies of Being and Consciousness*. Prologue to Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007.

[58] Colosi, Peter J. "The Uniqueness of Persons in the Life and Thought of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II, with Emphasis on His Indebtedness to Max Scheler." *Karol Wojtyła's Philosophical Legacy*. Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series I, Culture and Value, Volume 35. General Editor George F. McLean. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. 2008, Washington. p. 30

> through the Middle Ages up to Thomas' contemporary, Bonaventure.[59]

As Tarasiewicz[60] explains, Wojtyła was attracted to Scheler's phenomenology, to his ethics of values, which was the gate to the primacy of love, opposed to Kant's formalism of the categorical imperatives which influenced collectivism.

Wojtyła's "Social Participation" leads to social action, solidarity, confronting the de-humanization, de-personalization of modernity

Rice explains why Cornelio Fabro's "participation" is so central for Wojtyła's Personalism and orientation to the community against totalitarian regimes:

> By his own account, Wojtyła emphasizes, through his theory of participation, a dimension that totalitarian systems deny to persons through their practical alienation and isolation as mere units within an ideologically atomized and subsequently aggregated whole. In this sense, his theory of participation, like his entire philosophical approach, may be seen, inter alia, to constitute a response to his experiences under two totalitarian systems. At the foundation of the dimension of participation, a man's actions "together with others" disclose the personal structure of self-determination, self-possession, self-dominion, and self-gift that characterizes authentic human actions as such […] The theory of participation does not, . . . occupy a central place in Wojtyła's

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[59] McLean O.M.I., George F. *Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007. p. 17.

[60] Tarasiewicz, Pawel. "The common sense personalism of St. John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła)." *Studia Gilsoniana*. 2014. John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Poland. p. 630.

> philosophical anthropology, . . . it is one of the most important elements of that anthropology […] Wojtyła's theory of participation influences his treatment of human action, especially with respect to its culminating gift of self, which he claims is best, but not exclusively, understood in the context of betrothed love.[61]

Peter Costello's approach is an excellent summary of how, for Wojtyła, phenomenology leads to action, oriented to community; "participation" leads to social action, to solidarity, to confrontation with collectivist totalitarianism:

> The way that community can recognize both the objective and subjective moments of action is by getting a handle on the common good […] When we get participation right, we are in 'solidarity.' Solidarity is the way in which our participation, our acting together as self-determining persons, "furthers [the common good's] realization […]" Wojtyła claims that participation requires that the person "retains…the personalistic value of his own action and at the same time shares in the realization and the results of communal acting."[62]
>
> Wojtyła sees this intertwining of ontology and axiology, this intimacy of being and manifestation, when he claims that the notion of neighbor evinces "the mutual relation and subordination of all men according to their common humanness itself."
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> Such a description relies implicitly on pairing, on the structure of givenness of human persons to one another. We act 'according to common humanness,' according to our being. The

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[61] Rice, Joseph. On the "Proper Weight of a Man": Reexamining the Poetic Foundations of Wojtyła's Theory of Participation. Cited by: McLean O.M.I., George F. *Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007. p. 298.

[62] Costello, Peter. "Pope John Paul II's 'Participation' in the 'Neighborhood' of Phenomenology." *Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007. p . 48.

neighbor is not a category of choice, but an essential necessity that is lived in the very meaning and being of one's body.

For Husserl, pairing is the way that both oneself and the other experience a mutual reaching toward the other to claim the other as one moment of a shared meaning.[63]

[63] Ibid. p. 56.

VI.

SPIRITUALITY ENLIGHTENS OUR DISCERNMENT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the sixth dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: it inspires and enlightens our discernment. The discernment that spirituality builds is an extraordinary source of happiness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter is crucial for our lives: discernment is a central dimension of leadership, making decisions based on our discernment, building human capital, the best possible knowledge, and social capital, the best possible relationships by making decisions that involve our rational, emotional, and spiritual intelligences.

This chapter is especially crucial for decision making: modern strategic management is based on critical thinking, which has great strengths but profound limitations and can lead to social and ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve; discernment resolves the limitations of critical thinking, helping to resolve these dilemmas.

World peace results from our discernment, relying on our rational, emotional and spiritual intelligence, and the dimensions of spirituality discussed in this book, consciousness, better knowledge, life journey, higher values, religiosity, and our relationships and communities, leading to social transformation and social action.

Summary of the chapter

Modern higher education and strategic management promote critical thinking to make decisions. However, in our daily lives, we often rely on our discernment.

We exercise discernment when we ponder the value of an idea, whether it leads to the right direction, choosing the right road that leads to life, beauty, goodness, truth, freedom, and happiness.

We exercise discernment when we ponder the values of the person that generated that idea, the legitimacy of the sources of information, its authority, reliability, and trustfulness.

We exercise discernment when we confront the ideas and their sources, searching reliable sources, wise people, respected scriptures, communities that have balanced responses, dialogue with respected communities, people with moral authority, and role models.

Discernment involves spirituality, which considers the dimensions of greatness discussed in this book: discernment relies on personal and community knowledge, transcendence, beauty, goodness, truth, and love, on presence, values, relationships, love, on the presence of God (for religious people), relationship with God, on relationships, on the power to foster social organizations, on the power to transform, creation, recreation, reformation, union, on virtues, on the meaning of our existence, the capacity to deal with suffering, on the power to foster spiritual, emotional and physical health, on the power to perform social actions.

Ignatian discernment considers the motions of the soul, consolation versus desolation, contemplation with an affective orientation, hearing, seeing, and tasting, the soul's positive and negative emotional states, fear of death, desire for health, concern for family, images, ideas, attractions, revulsions, attitudes, aspirations, values, and relationships.

Ignatian discernment involves Spiritual Exercises, discovering God as a source of life and happiness; knowing and loving Jesus

leads us to follow him, become part of his mission, his values, in the establishment of his Kingdom; joining him in his passion and death leads us to be purified, become free men, liberated from all attachments, becoming his instruments to help others on the same journey; joining Jesus' resurrection leads us to love and serve him in concrete ways in everyone's lives in the world, introduced into the Trinitarian life, the key of all transformation, to provide life to others.

Critical thinking is an intellectual exercise relying on practical information

What is critical thinking? Why has it become so relevant today?

Encyclopedia Britannica links critical thinking with the exercise of dissent; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy links it to the "Critical Thinking Movement," which aims to inform and improve public reasoning and debate by promoting models of education that emphasize the critical examination of beliefs and decisions, and the development of the skills that this requires.

The Critical Thinking Community[1] provides some definitions:

- Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that

[1] The Critical Thinking Community: http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766

transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.[2]

- Critical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way.[3]
- The ability to think critically, involves three things: (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences, (2) knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and (3) some skill in applying those methods.[4]

Modern critical thinking is deeply connected with the discipline of "system analysis." System analysis requires developing a conceptual map that links the environment, the strategies, and the results. The strategies and results typically involve the use of metrics that provide critical thinking.

Critical thinking is an intellectual activity. People receive information and analyze it with a critical attitude.

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[2] The Critical Thinking Community: Michael Scriven & Richard Paul. 1987. https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766

[3] The Critical Thinking Community: Linda Elder, September. 2007. https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/an-interview-with-linda-elder-about-using-critical-thinking-concepts-and-tools/495

[4] Glaser, Edward M. *An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking.* 1941. Teacher's College, Columbia University. https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766

Discernment for John Cassian, a phenomenological view: values and our capacity to perceive them

This book's introduction describes a paradox: it is difficult for a person to know the sources of spiritual intuitions.

The story of Tobit shows how Tobiah was unaware that he was with an angel. The passage of the disciples of Emmaus in the Bible shows that the disciples were unaware that they were talking to Jesus or why their hearts were burning. The story of Prince Arjuna from the Hindu Bhagavad Gita shows how Arjuna was unaware that he was talking to God Krishna.

Arzubialde[5] explains two ways of understanding discernment: the first one is more dogmatic and focuses on the real value of reality. A second one focuses on the sources of spiritual motions, according to Ignatius of Loyola.

Kees Waaijman[6] explains the first type of discernment, proposing a holistic analysis of discernment based on John Cassian's insights.

John Cassian (360-430) proposed an intuition of discernment based on values and our capacity to perceive them. To discern the value of interpersonal exchange, I must consider my values, the other person's values, and the value of what we are exchanging. This reflects the phenomenological intentionality discussed in this book.

John Cassian relies on a metaphor, how a trader discerns whether a gold coin is valid: 1. whether it is real gold, 2. whether the coin is original or falsified, 3. whether the producer is qualified and, 4. whether the coin has the right weight.

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[5] Arzubialde, S.J., Santiago. *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Analisis*. Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae. Bilbao. Spain. 2009.

[6] Waaijman, Kees. Espiritualidad. *Formas, fundamentos y métodos*. Ediciones Sígueme. 2011. Salamanca. Spain.

1. Whether it is real gold

It relates to the ability to discern the value people are looking for with their decisions. Are people going in the right direction, choosing the right road?

Different traditions respond: people need to learn to discern whether such a road leads them into life or death, so the role of discernment is to find differences, look beyond, rely on rationality or intuition, prudence, justice. People need to discern the values between good versus evil, freedom versus coercion, life versus death, truth versus falsehood. Decisions made out of the correct values lead to spiritual rewards: peace, happiness, life.

Scheler and Hartmann propose hierarchies of values to make such decisions. People perceive different phenomena uncritically; they need to start a validation process of the phenomena, starting with their values, criteria of what they are looking for, and importance.

2. Whether the coin is original or falsified

It refers to a human's ability to discern the legitimacy of the source of information, interpret the origin of what a person is reading, seeing, visualizing, observing, where that information is coming from, who produced it, and whether an authority has real value. Based on the reliability of the authority, we can trust the information, the coin.

Phenomenology recommends that if people feel uncertain about a phenomenon that they perceive, they should stay open to other phenomena until they feel entirely secure, to enrich the sample, complete the picture until the sample and the source of information can be validated until they can trust on the source of knowledge.

3. Whether the producer is qualified

People find means that help discern whether the sources of the different strategies are qualified and have moral value or integrity to trust them. That requires to confront it to other sources, wise people, respected scriptures, communities that have balanced responses, the dialogue with respected communities, and people with moral authority and role models.

Realism and phenomenology consider that people perceive different phenomena. For example, a person says something, and we are open to the possibility of trusting that person until we have other pieces of evidence that confirm whether we should trust them or not.

4. Whether the coin has the right weight

Discernment requires a final test, an examination, a trial to assess the value of the decision, the strategy, the person, like passing the steel through fire to make sure it is valuable steel, to go deeper into them to probe them, to understand their foundations, their roots, to find out what is real and authentic, the core.

According to Waaijman it involves a dynamic aspect: to discern external realities as part of a transformation process that follows God's plan, dialogue and understand and leads the world into better situations, or believe that everything is pure destiny, psychological or social issues, socio-cultural constructions.

Discernment for Ignatius of Loyola: motions of the soul, consolation versus desolation

In his Spiritual Exercises (Ejercicios Espirituales, EE), Ignatius of Loyola[7] introduces the role of discernment to interpret the "motions of the soul": consolation versus desolation. When we decide, we may feel consolation or desolation: being sensitive, reflecting on thoughts, images, ideas, emotions, inclinations, desires, feelings, repulsions, attractions, fear of death, desire for health, the concern of family, caused by good or evil spirits.

Discernment of spirits[8] helps us to understand where God is behind these interior movements, caused by "good spirits" and "evil spirits," which provoke "consolation" and "desolation." Consolation refers to sentiments such as feeling alive and connected to others, filled with love, joy, peace; desolation refers to sentiments such as feeling in dense darkness or turmoil, confusion, doubt, disgust, lacking faith, hope, or love.

> Spiritual consolation is an experience of being so on fire with God's love that we feel impelled to praise, love, and serve God and help others as best as we can. Spiritual consolation encourages and facilitates a deep sense of gratitude for God's faithfulness, mercy, and companionship in our life. In consolation, we feel more alive and connected to others.[9]
>
> Spiritual desolation, in contrast, is an experience of the soul in heavy darkness or turmoil. We are assaulted by all sorts of

[7] Loyola Press. http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits.

[8] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/introduction-to-discernment-of-spirits.

[9] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/introduction-to-discernment-of-spirits.

> doubts, bombarded by temptations, and mired in self-preoccupations. We are excessively restless and anxious and feel cut off from others. Such feelings, in Ignatius's words, "move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love."[10]

There is a risk of erring. Some people may experience peace by making selfish decisions that oppose God's will entirely and harm others, which is a false consolation; for these people, desolation may provoke the beginning of a new awareness. Others may experience pain by doing what is good and right, or just because they are being led in a new direction, which is a painful consolation.

How can I know if my consolation results from making a good decision, or desolation, the result of making a wrong decision?

To solve this dilemma, Ignatius recommends his "Rules of discernment"[11] to interpret the Spirit's action on everyone. They present ways to discern whether our consolation or desolation results from a good or bad decision by listening, reflecting, and interpreting the soul's motions. Psychology, spirituality, and morality converge on the exercise of discernment.

Ignatius's discernment is the outcome of the EE, a way to search and find God's will for human lives. A man seeks to grow in union with God by discerning God's will, considering God's fidelity, the extraordinary value of his creation, presence, gifts, and support. Discernment helps to see everyone's lives as journeys, growing, God walking with everyone. Discernment helps to feel gratitude. Discernment is a journey to understanding God's plan for the creation, the purpose of everyone's lives, sharing Jesus mission, collaborating with

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[10] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/introduction-to-discernment-of-spirits.

[11] Loyola, Ignatius. *Rules for Discernment. Spiritual Exercises.*

God's action in the world, discerning what service everyone can contribute to his plan, and how God can do helps each person to achieve their ends.

David Lonsdale[12] defines discernment as "the ability both to allow one's own life to be formed and guided by the word of God," living a life of relationship with God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and how this relationship shapes personal values, how it generates a process of discernment "which requires the support of a daily living, open and sensitive to the movements and leading of the Spirit of God."

Lonsdale states what discernment essentially is: as many prophets refer to "the Word of God came to me saying…," and according to Isaiah, the Word of the Lord is "creative, energetic, enlightening, fruitful, life-giving." Discernment then is "the ability both to allow one's own life to be formed and guided by the word of God."

Lonsdale goes beyond that and refers to how discernment is living a life of relationship with God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and how this relationship shapes personal values, how it generates a process of discernment "which requires the support of a daily living, open and sensitive to the movements and leading of the Spirit of God." Such discernment process requires "assiduous prayer, information, reflection on affective responses concerning God, and confirmation in terms of easiness or need for further searching."

> Discernment has to do with our deepest attitude, aspirations, values and relationships to come to the surface, so that it is they which give shape and direction to our choices. Everyday life poises a continuous succession of choices, the one leading to the fullness of life in the love of God, the other leading in a direction that is ultimately dehumanizing and destructive, as Moses depicted, "I set before we life or death, blessing or curse; choose

[12] Lonsdale, David. *Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The art of discernment.* Ave Maria Press. 1992. Notre Dame, Indiana.

life, then, so that we and our descendants may live in the love of Yahweh our God." [13]

The origin of Loyola's discernment: The Spiritual Exercises

This section will rely on the book: "Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Analisis" by Santiago Arzubialde, S.J., as well as other sources quoted.

What is the foundation of Loyola's discernment?

Ignatius of Loyola proposed the most comprehensive view of discernment, as part of his "Spiritual Exercises." The same way people exercise their bodies when they walk, run, and exercise their spirits when they meditate, contemplate, pray.

Loyola's EE have a specific purpose: to make people free, "searching and finding God's will for our lives."[14] This requires a personal transformation, knowing and becoming God's friends, loving him, and orienting personal lives to search and find his will.

> The Spiritual Exercises are a compilation of meditations, prayers, and contemplative practices developed by Saint Ignatius Loyola to help people deepen their relationship with God. The most common way of going through the Exercises now is a "retreat in daily life," which involves a month long program of daily prayer and meetings with a spiritual director.[15]
>
> The Spiritual Exercises grew out of Ignatius Loyola's personal experience as a man seeking to grow in union with God and to discern God's will. Ignatius wrote that the Exercises:

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[13] Lonsdale, David. *Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The art of discernment.* Ave Maria Press. 1992. Notre Dame, Indiana.

[14] Loyola, Ignatius. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.* Translated by Father Elder Mullan, S.J., *Principles and Foundation.* P.J. Kenedy & Sons. 1914. New York. p. 233.

[15] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises.

> "have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one's life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment."[16]

The origin of the Ignatian discernment: contemplation with an affective orientation, hearing, seeing, tasting

According to Loyola Press:

> The two primary forms of praying taught in the Exercises are meditation and contemplation. In meditation, we use our minds. We ponder the basic principles that guide our life. We pray over words, images, and ideas. Contemplation is more about feeling than thinking. Contemplation often stirs the emotions and enkindles deep desires. In contemplation, we rely on our imaginations to place ourselves in a setting from the Gospels or in a scene proposed by Ignatius. We pray with Scripture. We do not study it.[17]

Godfrey O'Donnell[18] explains how "Ludolph of Saxony, a fourteenth-century Carthusian, is Ignatius's immediate source for his method of contemplating the mysteries of the life of Christ." His "Vita Christi"[19] presents meditations with an affective orientation, focusing on the images of the scriptures, drawing affections, hearing, seeing, tasting, as if they were part of our present life.

As O'Donnell describes:

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[16] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/what-are-the-spiritual-exercises.

[17] Ibid.

[18] O'Donnell, Godfrey. *Contemplation.* American Theological Library Association.

[19] *Vita Jesu Christi e quatuor evangeliis et scriptoribus orthodoxis concinnata per Ludolphum de Saxonia.* Ed. Bolard, Rigollot and Camandet. Extracted from O'Donnell, Godfrey. Contemplation. Paris. p 4.

> Jesus 'become man for me', He is present in the moment of our prayer, 'Imagine our Lord present before you on the cross and begin to speak with him'. It is an invitation to have a personal relationship with Jesus, personal encounters with Him, more intuitive, passive prayer, relying on the senses, an awareness of his presence. "We have arrived at the Ignatian description of consolation: contemplation is accompanied by consolation; where there is consolation there is contemplation."[20]

Dae-Seop Yi[21] states that "Javier Melloni, in his book The Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition, distinguishes the process of contemplation as purgative, illuminative, and unitive."

First week. Reviewing our life, positive and painful experiences, strengths and limitations, relationship with God, God's fidelity, the value of his creation, his presence, his gifts, his support, our life as a journey, walking with God, feeling gratitude

> The first week of the Exercises is a time of reflection on our lives in light of God's boundless love for us. We see that our response to God's love has been hindered by patterns of sin. We face these sins knowing that God wants to free us of everything that gets in the way of our loving response to him. The first week ends with a meditation on Christ's call to follow him.[22]

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[20] O'Donnell, Godfrey. *Contemplation*. American Theological Library Association.

[21] Dae-Seop Yi. *Conversion Experience Through Contemplation in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises*. http://dx.doi.org/10.18708/kjcs.2016.07.101.1.175

[22] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/what-are-the-spiritual-exercises.

The first week of the EE, is an exercise of imagination, scriptures, meditation, contemplation. Week 1 of the EE invites us to review our lives, memories, the episodes that shaped our lives, what feelings are linked with these episodes, and all the positive and painful experiences. To become aware of our strengths and limitations, our relationship with God. To consider God's fidelity, the extraordinary value of his creation, his presence, his gifts, his support. To see our lives as journeys, a growth, and how God walked with us; to feel gratitude.

This "journey" leads to understanding God's plan for the creation and everyone, the purpose of our lives, what service we can contribute to his plan, and God has helped us achieve our ends. As Ignatius expressed:

> Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created.[23]

That "journey" requires that we are free:

> For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.[24]

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[23] Loyola, Ignatius. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*. Translated by Father Elder Mullan, S.J., Principles and Foundation. P.J. Kenedy & Sons. 1914. New York. p. 19.

[24] Ibid.

This confronts us with the reality of our lack of freedom, limitations, addictions, disorders, inclinations, fears, imbalances, sins. We pray to God to help us understand the origin of our wrongdoings, heal, get free from attachments, get peace, receive his embrace, forgiveness, infinite mercy, smile, and love for everyone; this fills us with gratitude. Moreover, this healing leads to a new lifestyle, in which we love Jesus, follow him in his mission, we care for others:

> Luke 4:18-19. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, To preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward.

According to Arzubialde,[25] the first week is a preparation for the EE, by doing a general self-examination, which involves a review of our personal life, to discover all the goodness received from God, and consequently, to be able to love him. The purpose is not intellectual: it is a sensible exercise to feel and taste the goodness of God in our life, discovering our weaknesses, wrongdoings, which destroy our ability to love God, as well as God's plan for us and the world. This process develops a spiritual sense, leading to discovering God as a source of life and happiness; this spiritual sense affects the entire personality, feelings, emotions. This spiritual sense emerges from the EE, from the method, the process, and not as much from ideas; we become free, humble, full of joy, driven by God's love.

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[25] Arzubialde, S.J., Santiago. *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Análisis*. Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae. 2009. Bilbao. Spain.

Jose María Fernández-Martos[26] explains Ignatius' passion for reality. Fernández-Martos explains how Freud stated that "every neurosis alienates the patient from real life." During week 1, the EE help us connect with our stories, heal neurosis, lead to a road of progressive incorporation of the reality, change, and heal us.

This discovery initiates a process of personal and social transformation, strengthening our participation in God's life, as persons and as members of society.

Dae-Seop Yi[27] explains how the first week presents the purgative way, relying on meditation: thinking, reasoning, considering, imagination, and affections. The purpose is to have an awareness of our sins and feel abhorrence for them, in the presence of a God of mercy, who helps us in our conversion, a change of heart, "the heart-breaking experience of being loved and forgiven by God."[28]

Second week. In contact with Jesus, his mission, his life, his words, his actions, his values, our need for discernment to live in the Kingdom of God, leading a profound personal and social transformation

The meditations and prayers of the second week teach us how to follow Christ as his disciples. We reflect on Scripture passages: Christ's birth and baptism, his sermon on the mount, his ministry of healing and teaching, his raising Lazarus from the dead. We

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[26] Fernández-Martos, Jose María. *La incorporación de la realidad como clave del cambio en los Ejercicios Espirituales.* Psicología y Ejercicios Ignacianos. Editado por Carlos Alemany, José Antonio García-Monge. Editorial Sal Terrae. Bilbao. Spain. 1997.

[27] Dae-Seop Yi. *Conversion Experience Through Contemplation in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises*. http://dx.doi.org/10.18708/kjcs.2016.07.101.1.175

[28] Ibid.

> are brought to decisions to change our lives to do Christ's work in the world and to love him more intimately.[29]

Following Arzubialde[30], in the second week, we get in complete contact with Jesus' humanity and our reaction of following him or not. The love, gratitude, and relationship with God that started to build in week 1 lead us to week 2, producing the desire to be part of his mission.

As Arzubialde explains, we visit Jesus stories, meditating on how they unveil Jesus mission, starting in the Old Testament, the creation of the world, the stories of Genesis: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Exodus, the prophets; and the New Testament, Jesus own life, the stories of his parents, his birth in the manger, his hidden life, how each paragraph expresses his loyalty to God's plan, Jesus mission, and how it becomes everyone's mission, his Baptism, the temptations, the call to the 12 apostles, their mission, his call to mission to all of us in the Sermon of the Mount, the parables, the Kingdom of God, the miracles and healings he performed.

As Arzubialde explains, Ignatius follows the contemplative intuitions of Bonaventure: it is not intellectual speculation nor moralism; it is not about making decisions. It is about sensing, viewing, hearing, smelling, touching, perceiving the sentiments, getting immersed in Jesus' humanity. That interaction opens the door to receiving the love of Jesus, together with a profound knowledge of Jesus. This week continues the personal transformation by confronting our values: what values and affections drive our lives, God or the sensible things? Ignatius speaks of two flags, which flag everyone follows, the bad one or the good one, the world or God? Utility, security, riches,

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[29] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/what-are-the-spiritual-exercises

[30] Arzubialde, S.J., Santiago. *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Analisis*. Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae. Bilbao. Spain. 2009.

greed, honor, even if they require to abandon everyone's values, concern for the community? What is God? A Trinitarian community of love.

Week 2 introduces the need for discernment and how the experience of discernment leads to a profound personal and community transformation.

Jesus Arroyo[31] explains how, when we select the Kingdom of God, we start a personal transformation process by changing our ideals. To live in the Kingdom, we need discernment to make decisions:

- We need discernment to decide which of the "two flags" follow (Dos Banderas), the two armies, the army of the eternal king and the army of the worldly king; consequently, everyone needs discernment to understand how personal decisions lead everyone behind which of the two flags.
- We need discernment to become aware of who we are, what among three types of character is our character (Tres Binarios), how we react to attachments that define who we are: first, the one that has attachments to the world but does not dare to fight against them, second the person that has attachments but fools himself finding excuses to battle, and third the honest and committed person that struggles against attachments.

Jesus Arroyo[32] provides a profound explanation of the psychological transformation that week 2 produces: the transformation of

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[31] Arroyo, Jesus. *La transformación del yo en la dinámica de los Ejercicios Espirituales: Etapas de un proceso*. Psicología y Ejercicios Ignacianos. Editado por Carlos Alemany, José Antonio García-Monge. Editorial Sal Terrae. 1997. Bilbao. Spain.

[32] Ibid.

the affections (the Id), of the narcissism (ego), and the ideals (super-ego). Arroyo summarizes such transformation on the following terms:

1. [The ideals of the Kingdom] The transformation of the affections (the Id: love of adhesion) was produced by switching old affective contents for others valid for the Kingdom.
2. [The two flags] The transformation of the ego was produced by the displacement of self-love (narcissist love: glory) to the filiation, but above all, to the fraternity: from the glory of the ego to the glory of God passing through human mediations.
3. [Three types of character] The transformation of the superego (the ideal ego, following Jesus in his brothers) it was possible by the presentation of a new life project that eliminated the old one. By accepting this ideal, the orientation of life and activities change.[33]

What is the outcome of week 2?

This second week leads to a profound personal and social transformation: it unveils who we are, affections, addictions that we have developed, psychological issues. Ignatius does not ignore us and does not propose a voluntarist road; instead, he proposed a transformation worked by God; we abandon ourselves on God.

Dae-Seop Yi[34] states that the second and third weeks reflect the illuminative way, the beginning of contemplation, in which the retreatant must imagine the scenes of the scriptures vividly, becoming part of them, a personal encounter with this reality, leading to the love of Jesus, that would change our lives: contemplation leads to conversion.

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[33] Ibid. p. 82.

[34] Dae-Seop Yi. "Conversion Experience Through Contemplation in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises." http://dx.doi.org/10.18708/kjcs.2016.07.101.1.175

Third week. Jesus passion and death, sharing his mission

> We meditate on Christ's Last Supper, passion, and death. We see his suffering and the gift of the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of God's love.[35]

Week 3 introduces Jesus Passion, the conflicts and confrontations that his mission generated, the cleansing of the temple, his denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, the adverse reaction that his mission encountered, his passion, and death.

As Arzubialde[36] explains, week 3 is an exodus, walking out of self-love, toward fully loving God, identifying with Jesus' life and mission; following his call, contemplation becomes denser, more silent, and more intense.

Arzubialde presents an excellent contrast to understand the role of desire. As the hunger for food, the desires are natural and spontaneous pulsions, are parts of life. Can the satisfaction of that desire be part of love?

When the desire is disorganized	**When the desire is ordered by love**
1. He is scattered; he is dissipated.	1. He is unified for a single purpose.
2. He is ego-centered; he retreats on himself and only seeks his complacency and satisfaction.	2. He is unselfish and clean because he wants happiness from the noble, friendship, and love. Only this makes him happy.
3. Innate drives move him.	3. He is organized by love from the outside.

[35] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/what-are-the-spiritual-exercises

[36] Arzubialde, S.J., Santiago. *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Análisis*. Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae. 2009. Bilbao. Spain. p. 518.

4. He instigates and insists. He leads to losing manners using pressure. Anxiety, craving, and hurry appear.	4. He is demure and correct. Sobriety, delicacy, and measure are modes of love.
5. He is uncontrolled. He does not know the measure and ends up dominating the man.	5. He is spontaneously owner, "lord of himself."
6. He is refined and satisfied with the subtle.	6. He enjoys the simple and common. He enjoys the ordinary and clean good, the holy.
7. He does not consider whether it produces good or bad; for example, to health.	7. He looks for what suits best, what makes him faithful to the purpose he intends, works, and serves, what helps him grow in love.
8. He is absorbed by the present good but is always worried, in advance (investigates), to satisfy more fully and refine his taste. He suffers the advance of his desires.	8. He is at peace and is content with what he has, but he is always attentive to the important thing that happiness gives him.
9. His horizon is usually the enjoyment, the immediate and sensitive satisfaction of the current good.	9. He is called to be happy, but his enjoyment is the consolation of the good.
10. Once he achieves the desire and satisfies the pleasure, his sediment is dissatisfaction and sadness.	10. Once he satisfies the desire, the sediment is that complete happiness that gives love.

Figure 2 The role of desire according to Arzubialde. Arzubialde, S.J., Santiago. Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Análisis. Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae. 2009. Bilbao. Spain.

As Gilles Cusson[37] explains, week 3 leads us a step further into sharing Jesus' mission, liberation from the effects of sin. In week 2, we knew and loved him. However, in week 3, we join him in a critical part of his mission: his passion and death, to be purified, have our sins forgiven, become free men, liberated from all attachments, becoming his instruments to help others on the same journey.

Fourth week Jesus resurrection, the "Contemplation to reach love," to the joy of loving, to rejoice with Jesus in the new life gained through faithful love, a new life from redemption and freedom, mutuality and intimacy, compassion and faithfulness

> We meditate on Jesus' resurrection and his apparitions to his disciples. We walk with the risen Christ and set out to love and serve him in concrete ways in our lives in the world.[38]

In week 4, we meditate on his resurrection, his interactions with his disciples, and how He prepares us for the mission.

Arzubialde[39] explains that as part of week 4, Ignatius explains a "Contemplation to reach love." Through the creation, God's gifts to each human being, which are expressions of God's love, the believer is introduced into the Trinitarian life.

As Herbert Alphonso expresses, the "Contemplation to reach love" of week 4 is the natural outcome of the "election" of week 2: God fills with his love and gives himself to those with free, open, meek, and available hearts. For Alphonso:

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[37] Cusson, Gilles. "La experiencia del Misterio Pascual, fuente eficaz de esperanza en un mundo de dolor." *Ejercicios Espirituales y mundo de hoy*. Congreso internacional de Ejercicios. Editorial Sal Terrae. Loyola. Spain. 1991.

[38] Loyola Press. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/what-are-the-spiritual-exercises

[39] Arzubialde, S.J., Santiago. *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio, Historia y Análisis*. Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae. Bilbao. Spain. 2009.

> The secret of the prayer and union with God in the middle of our busy daily activities, is the continuous self-denial and personal non-attachment, authentic inner freedom from whatever we are doing in every moment, a personal non-attachment that makes one free and available to God that comes continually.[40]

Parmananda Divarkar[41] expands: the EE reach their zenith on the "Contemplation to reach love." By reaching love, we reach the most extraordinary secret of the mystery of God, the key of all reality, of all transformation.

Gilles Cusson[42] explains: the joy of the resurrected person is apostolic, to provide life to others, to help others to liberate from sin and death, to have the consolation of the Spirit over the victory over death.

Dae-Seop Yi[43] explains how the fourth week reflects the unitive way, "to the joy of loving, to rejoice with Jesus in the new life gained through faithful love, a new life from redemption and freedom, mutuality and intimacy, compassion and faithfulness. We have entered deeply into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; now, we

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[40] Alphonso, Herbert. "La vida diaria como oración." *Ejercicios Espirituales y mundo de hoy*. Congreso internacional de Ejercicios. Editorial Sal Terrae. Loyola. 1991. Spain. p. 89.

[41] Divarkar, Parmananda. "La transformación del yo y la experiencia espiritual: el enfoque ignaciano a la luz de otros modelos antropológicos." *Psicología y Ejercicios Ignacianos*. Editado por Carlos Alemany, José Antonio García-Monge. Editorial Sal Terrae. Spain. 1997.

[42] Cusson, Gilles. "La experiencia del Misterio Pascual, fuente eficaz de esperanza en un mundo de dolor." *Ejercicios Espirituales y mundo de hoy*. Congreso internacional de Ejercicios. Editorial Sal Terrae. Loyola. Spain. 1991.

[43] Dae-Seop Yi. *Conversion Experience Through Contemplation in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises*. http://dx.doi.org/10.18708/kjcs.2016.07.101.1.175

are invited to become the One we have contemplated. This experience of God's love must be allowed for retreatants to mature and grow throughout their entire life after the retreat."[44]

Discernment heals and transforms persons and communities

The EE provide valuable insights on how discernment produces healing and transformation.

The first week of the EE, the exercise of imagination, scriptures, meditation, contemplation, invites us to review our lives, memories, the episodes that shaped our lives, discovering God as a source of life and happiness, impacting our personality, feelings, emotions, producing a personal transformation, humble, full of joy, driven by God's love.

The second week of the EE leads us to reflect on Scripture passages: knowing and loving Jesus, leads us to follow him, become part of his mission, his values, in the establishment of his Kingdom, the salvation and liberation of humanity from the effects of sin. The "Ideals of the Kingdom" lead to transform our "Id," transform affections into new ones valid for the Kingdom; the "Two flags" lead us to transform our "Ego" into a loving ego; the "Three types of character" us to transform our "Superego" by the presentation of a new life project that eliminated the old one.

In the third week of the EE, we meditate on Christ's Last Supper, Passion, and Death, his suffering, and the gift of the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of God's love. We join him in a critical part of his mission: his passion and death, to be purified, have our sins forgiven, become free men, liberated from all attachments, becoming his instruments to help others on the same journey.

In week 4 of the EE, we meditate on Jesus' resurrection and his apparitions to his disciples. We walk with the risen Christ and set out

[44] Ibid.

to love and serve him in concrete ways in our lives in the world. The "Contemplation to reach love," through the creation, the personal gifts that God provides to each human being, which are expressions of God's love. We are introduced into the Trinitarian life, the key of all transformation, to provide life to others, to help others to liberate from sin and death, to have the consolation of the Spirit over the victory over death.

Francisco José Ruiz Pérez[45] presents the EE as a personal journey. The EE generate a dynamic process, an encounter between the Creator-creature, a search-find, dispose-receive; its vital energy is the affection. The EE are not an accumulation of religious practices: they are an organic body of experiences that can be repeated forever, generating an experiential journey, a process, which structures all the person's affections, leading to life under God's light. Each person has different circumstances, personalities, and personal resources; consequently, each spiritual process is different.

Carlo María Martini explains a way to describe the EE, as the dynamics of a pure and authentically free election because it has been purified from worldly conditionings and shaped according to the choices of Jesus poor and humble. For Martini, the EE preserve an extraordinary actuality because they go to the heart of a free election and unveil the social and cultural conditioning that detract and mislead it. Martini presents an experience he led in the Cathedral of Milan as an expression of the EE, inviting non-believers to explain their reasons for not believing: 1,500 responded to the invitation. Martini concludes that in each person, there is a believer and a non-believer.

[45] Ruiz Pérez, S.J., Francisco José. *Teología del camino. Una aproximación antropológica-teológica a Ignacio de Loyola*. Ediciones Mensajero. Bilbao. Spain.

Discernment for non-religious persons: positive and negative emotional states of the soul as "good and bad spirits," fear of death, desire for health, the concern of family, images, ideas, attractions, revulsions, attitudes, aspirations, values, and relationships

What happens with non-religious people who do not believe in god's existence? Does discernment make any sense for them?

Joseph A. Tetlow[46] explains such complexity by expanding the concept of "good and bad spirits" to fear of death, desire for health, the concern of family, images, ideas, attractions, revulsions that impact a person's decisions.

What are these spirits? Once again, there are two readings, a religious one, for which spirits are real living subjects, and a non-religious one in which spirits are emotional states of the soul.

Margaret Silf[47] helps to understand the latter. Desolation turns people into themselves and drives them down the spiral into their negative feelings; desolation cuts them off from the community. Desolation makes them want to give up on things that were important to them; it takes over their whole consciousness and crowds out their distant vision; it covers up all their landmarks and drains them of energy.

Consolation directs everyone's focus outside and beyond themselves. Consolation lifts everyone's hearts to see other people's joys and sorrow and bonds them closer to their human community. Consolation generates new inspiration and ideas, restores balance and

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[46] Tetlow, S.J., Joseph, *Making Choices in Christ*. The Foundations of Ignatian Spirituality. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/discernment-in-a-nutshell.

[47] Silf, Margaret. *The Inner Compass*. https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/the-difference-between-consolation-and-feeling-good.

refreshes their inner vision, shows them where God is active in their lives, and leads them and releases new energy in them.

Beatrice Bruteau[48] explains that egotism, self-interest, and competition are the key drivers behind decisions, the norms to discern what is good or bad. The rational brain puts an order, ranks, creates opposites, associations based on self-interests and power, and organizes in specific power-based ways.

Meditation leads to discernment, which drives the soul to experience a different social order, from power-based to mutual enjoyment. Instead of creating ranks lord/servant, instead of competing, instead of caring about self-interests, we become more concerned with the Amicus way, friendship, cooperation.

William Barry[49] provides some examples of how discernment can help: "I'm not such a bad guy. I may steal money, but it's only what I deserve for all that I have done for this company.;" "Compared to Helen, I'm a saint.;" "I take care of my wife and kids; my affair with Jane doesn't hurt them because they don't know." He also provides an example of an alcoholic talking to himself: "We need a drink to relax after a hard day; we never lose a day's work because of drinking; our health is good, it is not having that bad of an effect." For cases like these, consolation and desolation can provide a way to understand which feelings are provided by the good and evil spirits.

Consequently, discernment involves relying on personal feelings to get a more in-depth understanding and make decisions based on values. Pierre Hadot[50] explains how the EE are related to three aspects:

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[48] Bruteau, Beatrice. "From 'Dominus' To 'Amicus': Contemplative Insight And A New Social Order." *CrossCurrents,* vol. 31, no. 3, 1981, pp. 273–284. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24458445

[49] Barry, S.J., William A. *A Friendship Like No Other. Experiencing God's Amazing Embrace.* https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/how-do-i-know-im-experiencing-god

[50] Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a way of life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1995. New Jersey.

1. They are a way of life, an attitude, a process to live life at its full;
2. They are a way to think through dialectic, Plato's dialogue, thesis-antithesis-synthesis, explore new frontiers, and relate to each other;
3. They are connected to death, renunciation, and non-attachment as a prerequisite to gaining the freedom to meditate and contemplate. However, above all, they are a way to learn, know themselves, get into themselves, and gain wisdom.

The Enneagram to exercise discernment: recognizing our virtues and passions, shadows, compulsions, limitations, and illusions

Richard Rohr, a recognized Franciscan writer, proposes the Enneagram to understand the soul's motions and deepen the psychological dimension to promote discernment.

Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson[51] explain how the Enneagram helps us discern by recognizing our virtues and passions, shadows, compulsions, limitations, and illusions.

The Enneagram helps us discover our true self, who we are, and our false self, a mask we created to live in the world, connect to others and please them. The Enneagram is like a mirror that shows us who we are.

The Enneagram helps us understand how we make decisions: do we rely on our head, heart, or guts? It helps us discover our obstacles to discerning and how to overcome them.

Several websites explain the Enneagram's nine personality types. Richard Rohr provides excellent resources so we can get to know

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[51] Riso, Don Richard and Russ Hudson. *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality*. Bantam. 1999. New York.

ourselves using the Enneagram: https://cac.org/the-enneagram-an-introduction/#Types

For example, type 1, the perfectionist, needs to be perfect. A man feels that his parents love him if he is perfect. If they criticize him, he becomes resentful and humorless. He learned to live to the expectations of others. The perfectionist's compulsion brings about the resentment and anger of not being always as perfect as expected.[52]

The Enneagram can help us to improve our discernment, first, by helping us identify our obstacles to discernment. For a 1: "Paying so much attention to errors and mistakes that you run the risk of being over discerning."[53]

To overcome our compulsions, we need to "acknowledge and accept reality as it is, understanding that there is an intrinsic perfection, even in that which is flawed."[54]

We can use the Enneagram to identify the personality types that best describe us, the obstacles to discernment, and how to overcome them.

It can help us to realize the difference between critical thinking and discernment: critical thinking is a rational exercise in which we analyze practical information using our reason; discernment relies on all possible knowledge, our consciousness, our values, our morality, our connectedness with others, our awareness of who we are, our psychology, our virtues, our passions, our brokenness, our capacity to transcend, to do great things.

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[52] Bergin, Eilis and Eddie Fitzgerald. *An Enneagram Guide: A Spirituality of Love in Brokenness*. Twenty Third Publications. 1995. New London, CT.

Riso, Don Richard and Russ Hudson. *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality*. Bantam. 1999. New York.

[53] *Enneagram Styles and Discernment*. https://theenneagraminbusiness.com/development/enneagram-styles-and-discernment/

[54] *Enneagram Styles and Discernment*. https://theenneagraminbusiness.com/development/enneagram-styles-and-discernment/

VII.

SPIRITUALITY PROVIDES MEANING TO OUR LIVES, IT HELPS TO TRANSFORM AND OVERCOME SUFFERING

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the seventh dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: the power to provide meanings and understanding to our existence, to transform and overcome suffering. The meaning of life that spirituality builds is an extraordinary source of happiness and greatness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter is crucial: spirituality, meanings, and suffering are many times connected; spirituality helps the suffering person to overcome and transform suffering, which is good, but it may not be enough. Spirituality helps the community to suffer with the suffering person, which leads them to support the suffering person to overcome suffering.

Suffering can provide an extraordinary value to our spirituality, living each dimension of spirituality for the richness it has, and not for the benefits it produces: God created us out of infinite love, even knowing that he would suffer for us; we bring children into the world out of love, even knowing that we will suffer for them.

This chapter plays a central role in modern political economy. Supply and demand curves, the pillars of all branches of modern economics, are derived from indifference curves, linked to utility curves, which are the product of utilitarianism, which proposes the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain. The moment that suffering can find a meaning, or can be reduced, this whole intellectual edifice becomes questionable.

This chapter plays a central role in decision-making. Several of the pillars of modern decision making such as economic value creation, Milton Friedman's corporate social responsibility of maximizing shareholder value, business ethics based on utilitarianism, are based on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. The moment that suffering can find a meaning, or can be reduced, all this intellectual edifice becomes questionable.

World peace results from our spirituality providing meaning to our lives, considering our existence as a journey to transcendence and love, accepting suffering for a higher purpose, as part of our growing spiritually, as part of non-attachment, as part of our journey towards transcendence and love, of our journey towards God, as part of living a life with values, as part of our relationships, as part of our transformation, as part of social actions, accepting suffering to test our authenticity, overcoming and transforming suffering.

Summary of the chapter

Any person can discover that spirituality has an existential dimension: it helps us find the meaning of our lives and understand our lives as a journey with a past, present, and future.

For Heidegger, any person can discover the meaning of human existence, considering the time and history, considering that we are members of a human community, sharing experiences, impacting each other, a society in dialogue, accepting differences as all journeying toward the truth.

For Gadamer, we discover the meaning of our existence by interpreting reality, relying on language, and intuition, sharing our existence, a fusion of horizons.

Our life journeys may require efforts, sacrifice, risks, and failures, which produce suffering for a higher purpose, suffering as the price we pay for journeying to a better reality. Suffering can be bearable if we appreciate its positive outcomes; it may enrich us, elevate our

dignity, show our inner value, legitimate us and our journeys, and make us proud of who we are.

Each dimension of spirituality described in this book may help us to overcome or transform suffering: the wisdom produced by spirituality may help to understand suffering and overcome it; the transcendence produced by spirituality, beauty, goodness, truth, and love, may produce happiness, helping us overcome suffering; the values, relationships, and love produced by spirituality may transform our lives, helping us overcome suffering; building a community with values and love may lead us to help others, or lead others to help us, overcoming suffering; discernment may help to make decisions that have a positive impact on the person and community overcoming the desolation that discernment may generate; transformation, healing, social action, social change may help to build a better world, overcoming our suffering or helping others to overcome their suffering.

Suffering may enrich our spirituality: suffering may generate consciousness, richer knowledge, and wisdom; suffering can be the first step into a journey to transcendence; suffering may lead us to a more profound presence, values, and love; suffering may lead us into a more profound relationship with God, and with others; suffering may lead us into a richer discernment; into more powerful transformation, healing and social action.

Spirituality may produce suffering: the search for wisdom involves suffering, effort, and sacrifice; the search for transcendence requires suffering; the search for and defense of values, relationships, and love involves suffering; discernment may generate desolation; transformation, healing, social action, social change involve suffering.

Many times, suffering overwhelms us, it may be more than what we can resist, it may devastate us, and depress us: parents that suffer for the suffering or death of their children, children that suffer to see their parents getting old and sick, suffering and dying; we get sick

and become disabled; the experiences of war, striking poverty, injustice, endless suffering. We may fall into desperation, depression, resentment, bitterness, and isolation.

There is a mystery that we cannot always understand behind the reality of suffering, as the story of Job explains in this chapter. Why did God create us, knowing that we would suffer, and He would suffer with us? Why do we bring children to this world, knowing that they will inevitably suffer, and we will suffer for them? Why do we love others, knowing that loving them involves suffering? Why do we create, study, and work, knowing that they require suffering? Probably the only response is based on our spirituality: we are all on a journey toward transcendence, toward beauty, goodness, truth, and participation with God, and we cannot be happy unless we accept suffering as part of that journey.

An extraordinary woman once expressed a trauma of her life: she was sexually abused. For many years she suffered, asking God why He permitted this. Until one day she realized that having the personal experience of descending into the hell of sexual abuse allowed her to help other women who suffered the same trauma by descending with them into the hell of their sexual abuse to help them walk out of there. Her spirituality led her to find the meaning of her suffering, heal, transform herself, and become an agent of social action, helping other suffering women.

The epic of Gilgamesh shows that we all go through spiritual journeys to find the meaning of suffering. For Buddhism, spirituality leads to non-attachment to overcome suffering, anguish, pain, and unsatisfaction. The Old Testament presents the meaning of suffering for a higher purpose. The Genesis presents multiple testimonies of the suffering of the prophets; the exodus was a journey toward the promised land; Job was a model of a righteous sufferer, his wisdom and trust defeated suffering; the exile to Babylon: suffering to be free from external bonds, discovering life and love inside the soul; Jeremiah: suffering for the mission to transform the hearts of the people.

The New Testament presents a missionary meaning of suffering to build the Kingdom of God. The suffering of the Beatitudes, suffering for an ideal, will be compensated:

> (Matthew 5:6-11). Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

God suffers with us when we suffer:

> (Matthew 25:35-40) "I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger... I was naked... I was sick... I was in prison."

> (Acts 9:4-8) "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?... I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.'"

We suffer with Christ when we share his mission, helping suffering people, sick people, taking up his Cross; Jesus shared their suffering. Suffering can be transformed when we find a meaning to it:

- Dionysius the Areopagite: suffering as part of our spiritual journey, purification – illumination – union, a spirituality of rest, contemplation, silence, simplicity.
- Saint Augustine: suffering as part of our transformation journey toward union with God.
- Saint Francis: above all gifts of the Holy Spirit that Christ Jesus gives to his friends is the grace to overcome oneself,

accept willingly, out of love for Him, all contempt, all discomfort, all injury, and all suffering.

- Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Story of Job shows that we have a limited capacity to understand the origins of suffering as a result of our incapacity to understand reality, to see the power of God; suffering is an invitation to humility, an invitation to God to speak to us in our interiority, to strengthen us in our weakness.
- Saint John of the Cross: suffering drives us on a spiritual journey toward God's love.
- Thomas Merton: the desert is the place to connect to our inner lives and others and build authenticity.
- Viktor Frankl: love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire: a man who has nothing left in this world may know bliss in the contemplation of his beloved.
- Edward Schillebeeckx: God suffers with us when we suffer; suffering has positive effects: wisdom, transformation, presence of God.
- Peter Kreeft: suffering is part of the battle against evil.
- Harold Kushner: it is more important to have a good response to suffering than to find out its cause, the meaning of suffering is not to understand its causes, but what we do about it, the way we respond.
- Wojtyła suffered the invasion of Poland by the Nazis and the Soviets. Through his spirituality and experiencing Saint John of the Cross mysticism, he transformed his suffering, becoming an agent of social transformation, changing Poland and the entire world.

Suffering can be a great source of healing, transformation, and social action.

Karl Rahner. The meaning of our ordinary life: living our daily life with spirituality, despite suffering

Harvey D. Egan explains Karl Rahner's views on the meaning of our ordinary life's spirituality:

> Rahner holds the position that everyone—even the agnostic or atheist— who lives moderately, selflessly, honestly, courageously and in silent service to others, lives what he calls the 'mysticism of everyday life'. He stresses not only the intrinsic unity between the love of God and neighbour but also Jesus' teaching that love for the least of his brethren is love for him—even in the case of those who do not know him. Thus, the most profound form of the mysticism of everyday life, in Rahner's view, is the unreserved love for another.
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> When anyone—Hindu, Buddhist, Jew, Christian, Muslim, agnostic or atheist—courageously and totally accepts life and him- or herself, even when everything tangible seems to be collapsing, then that person experiences, at least implicitly, the holy Mystery that fills the emptiness both of oneself and of life. Accepting the depths of one's humanity, the depths of life and thus Mystery itself—fostered either with or without explicit Christian faith, hope and charity—is the salient feature in Rahner's mysticism of everyday life.
>
> Rahner offers common human experiences to help us 'dig ... out from under the rubbish of everyday experience' real life occurrences of grace, such as accepting with hope the experience of utter loneliness; forgiving with no expectation of the other's gratitude or even of feeling good about one's selflessness; being utterly faithful to the depths of one's conscience, even when taken as a fool; praying, even when it feels useless; maintaining faith, hope and love, even when there are no apparent reasons for so doing; experiencing bitterly the great gulf between what

we desire from life and what it actually gives us; and silently hoping in the face of death.

That which is amazing and even confusing in the life of Jesus is that it remains completely within the framework of everyday living; we could even say that in him concrete human existence is found in its most basic and radical form. The first thing that we should learn from Jesus is to be fully human![1]

The epic of Gilgamesh. A spiritual journey to find the meaning of suffering

The Story of Gilgamesh (3000 BC. Sumerian, Ancient Mesopotamia) describes a universal transformation journey that people experience in their lives, connecting their daily experiences with their superior beings.

The gods created Gilgamesh, one-third man, two-thirds god. He built the city of Uruk and ruled it with arrogance, selfishness, and lust The gods created Enkidu to teach Gilgamesh humility and justice. Wild Enkidu lived in nature and scared men. When Gilgamesh finds out, he gives him a woman who teaches him to become a civilized human. Enkidu goes to Uruk to challenge Gilgamesh for the rule of Uruk and wrestles with Gilgamesh. In the battle, they recognize each other as equals and become best friends. Afterward, they go to the world to share adventures. Enkidu dreams that he will die and go to a horrible place, and finally, he gets sick and dies.

Gilgamesh says to himself: "How can I rest, how can I be in peace? Despair is in my heart. What my brother is now, that I shall be when I am dead."

He decides to search for the answer to the problem of human mortality, old age, sickness, and death. He goes to the world of the gods after crossing a dark territory. The gods tell him that he will

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[1] Egan, Harvey D. *La teología mística de Karl Rahner*. Nueva York: Crossroad. 1998. pp. 45-47

not find a solution, that they created man and allotted him to death. He decides to cross the sea of death, and there he finds a wise man that explains to him the past and future.

He returns to Uruk, proud of his victory in the battle from which no one returns. In Uruk, he decides to live a different life: he does not abuse his power and deals justly with his people. As a result of his wisdom, he rules Uruk in glory, and one day he dies like all other mortals.

Gilgamesh's story shows the role of spiritual journeys in humans' lives, a search for God, a search for meaning, journeys toward wisdom and salvation, generating new behaviors.

Buddhism. Attachment leads to "dukkha": suffering, anguish, pain, unsatisfactoriness

The encounter with suffering, or "dukkha," was the beginning of Prince Siddhartha's transformation, which led to the four noble truths:

1. All existence is dukkha. The word dukkha has been variously translated as 'suffering', 'anguish', 'pain', or 'unsatisfactoriness'. The Buddha's insight was that our lives are a struggle, and we do not find ultimate happiness or satisfaction in anything we experience. This is the problem of existence.
2. The cause of dukkha is craving. The natural human tendency is to blame our difficulties on things outside ourselves. But the Buddha says that their actual root is to be found in the mind itself. In particular, our tendency to grasp at things (or to push them away) places us fundamentally at odds life.
3. The cessation of dukkha comes with the cessation of craving. As we are the ultimate cause of our difficulties, we are also the solution. We cannot change the things that happen to us, but we can change our responses.

4. There is a path that leads from dukkha. Buddha throws responsibility back on the individual, teaching methods to change ourselves, such as the Noble Eightfold Path.[2]

Suffering leads to transformation to reduce suffering, moving from ignorance to wisdom, building mindfulness, insights, discovering the true self, purification from selfishness and passions, balanced life, the middle way between sensuality and asceticism, the search for the community to deal with suffering.

The Buddha realized that asceticism did not eliminate suffering, so he looked for a balance, a middle way. For some time, he continued meditating, looking for a response to suffering, until he reached his "enlightenment," becoming the Buddha ("He who is awake"). The desert, solitude, and poverty are roads to discovering our true selves, away from social life's conflicts.

The Buddha dedicated the rest of his life to teaching the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Buddhist's Eightfold Path shows the centrality of meditation and non-attachment as a roadway to a happy life. According to Buddhism, meditation leads to 1. A right view, a balanced life, 2. A right intention, 3. A right speech, 4. A right morality to build a reasonable lifestyle for the entire community, 5. A right livelihood with mindfulness and compassion, 6. A right effort not led by passions, 7. A right mindfulness with a view of life that integrates the entire world and community, 8. An integrated life full of wisdom.

The Old Testament. Genesis: multiple testimonies of suffering for a higher purpose

In Genesis, when God tells Eve "in pain you shall bring forth children" and tells Adam "by the sweat of your brow you shall eat

[2] *The Four Noble Truths*. https://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/four-noble-truths

bread," in both cases, God is describing suffering as part of a higher purpose. In other words: suffering is Biblical, hard to avoid.

The Bible is full of stories that describe how spirituality had a price, a sacrifice. Trials such Abraham accepting to sacrifice the life of his only son; Jacob persecuted by Esau had to risk his life and suffer abuse for many years; Joseph was cast into the pit, sold as a slave, and incarcerated unjustly; Moses fled to Midian, and suffered the exodus; Joshua was persecuted and suffered war; Job lost his family, possessions and his health; David was persecuted by Saul; Hezekiah suffered the Syrian invasion; Tobit suffered blindness; Elijah was persecuted, crossed the desert; Elisha lived in exile; Micaiah was persecuted and imprisoned; Jeremiah almost died from persecution to be faithful to God, was persecuted and cast in a cistern; Daniel was cast into the pit of lions; Hananiah and his brethren were cast into the furnace of fire; Haman persecuted Esther; Judas Maccabæus and his brothers were persecuted, tortured and killed; Eleazar was martyred; the exile of the Israelites in Babylon; Jonah suffered three days in the whale.

The exodus: crossing the desert toward the promised land, suffering as a journey toward life

As Paul Robb[3] states, the Bible describes spiritual journeys. Everyone must go through their journeys, deserts, trials, limitations; everyone must get to know who they are, understand feelings, sadness, emotions, uncertainties, anxieties, dreams, wishes, lights and shadows, freedoms and slaveries, psychologies, histories, fears, and confusions. We need to know ourselves to avoid being victims of our circumstances, to understand why we fail, divorce, lose jobs, have unfinished ideals, loneliness, and illnesses.

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[3] Robb, Paul. "Conversion as a human experience." *Studies in the spirituality of Jesuits*. 1982.

For Belden Lane[4], a Presbyterian professor of theology at Saint Louis University, the desert is a marvelous laboratory for dealing with the self, the ego and its anxiousness, which is a major spiritual project. The desert is a training ground, is the place to find God in the middle of evil, temptation, struggles, and a place to learn to be independent of others, from their approvals and disapprovals, and be happy with that. Once a person gets the ability to be happy in a complete "non-attachment," they can return to the world and love others without expecting anything in return. That was the desert's experience in the initiation of Saint John the Baptist and Jesus' public lives.

For Belden, this is an experience everyone can have in our lives in the city, in families, friendships, at work, to interact with others positively, without needing them: then we can love. The desert, the non-attachment, accepting risks are pre-requisites for developing love and compassion.

Job, a model of a righteous sufferer, a knight of wisdom, of loving trust, of protest, defeating suffering

Carole R. Fontaine[5] discusses how Job, a righteous man, had to confront the reality of pain.

Job suffered in isolation, as his wife and friends denigrated him, and he considered that pain resulted from sins that he knew he did not commit. There were no rational or simple explanations for his pain.

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[4] Lane, Belden. Antony and the Desert Fathers: Christian History Interview - Discovering the Desert Paradox. https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-64/antony-and-desert-fathers-christian-history-interview.html

[5] Fontaine, Carole R. "'Arrows of the Almighty.' (Job 6:4): Perspectives on Pain." *Anglican Theological Review.* ART/LXVI:3. pp 243-248.

He resorted to spirituality to find a solution. Pain opens the door to our inner self, to an encounter with the Divine, searching for a higher illumination, as all things come from God, as Job stated, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Pain opens the door to feel others' pain, suffer with them, and feel compassion. Pain opens the door to participate in Christ's Passion in His redemptive power. Pain opens the door to transform our pain into new positive realities.

Verbin[6] explains how Maimonides presents how Job defeated suffering as a "knight of wisdom." It is through wisdom that his suffering is defeated, dissolving into mere pain. In Job's case, suffering was based on ignorance, his lack of understanding of reality. And wisdom defeated it, based on God's presence, on contemplating God, which invited God to share His wisdom, which led to happiness.

Nehama Verbin[7] explains how Kierkegaard presents how Job defeats suffering as a "knight of loving trust," by his faith in the middle of sorrow, by seeing suffering as a divine gift, as an invitation to strengthen his faith, suffering was seen as a blessing, a joy. Job was thankful for what he received from God; he still believed in a loving God: "The Lord gave and the Lord took away; Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Verbin[8] explains his Hasidic-inspired Job, how Job defeats suffering as a "knight of protest," refusing to reconcile with God: "God has wronged me; He has thrown up siege works around me. I cry, 'Violence!' but am not answered; I shout, but can get no justice" (Job 19:6-7). He was angry and resentful; he felt humiliated diminished;

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[6] Verbin, Nehama. Three knights of faith on Job's suffering and its defeat. International Journal of Philosophy and Theology, 2017 Vol. 78, Nos. 4-5, 382-395 Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2017.1284606

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

he felt he was righteous, valuable, and God mistreated him unfairly: "Why do the wicked live on, prosper and grow wealthy?" (Job 21:7, 17). How can he trust such an unfair God? However, this unfairness did not change his moral beliefs. Job defeats moral suffering; he names the injustice an injustice, and resists it, protests against it, reinforcing his integrity, his dignity; he does not bend to power, to injustice.

The exile to Babylon: suffering to be free from external bonds, discovering life and love inside

Kees Waaijman[9] analyzes the poem "By the Waters of Babylon" written by Saint John of the Cross. The poet has to live exiled in Babylon, an enemy country, away from his own country, Sion. He cries and longs for his old happiness; he hangs his memories and inner music out from himself, like a vain hope, like dead inside himself. In this emptiness, he realizes how Sion is the symbol of love, of God, and slowly his interior love starts to flourish, becoming a strong love again. This interior love shapes everyone's personality and makes them tender, sensitive, generous, loving.

Waaijman presents a parallel between this poem and how Saint John of the Cross was incarcerated by his fellow monks, isolated from the people he loved, tortured physically and emotionally, eating only bread and water for nine months, slowly dying. In this context, Babylon symbolizes his brothers who incarcerated him, the alienation from the Carmel he loved, his longing for his Sion; slowly, his love starts to flourish inside.

This poem reflects a universal symbol of the meaning of suffering: it helps to discover life and love inside everyone. It helps to kill the bonds to Babylon, a life with no values populated by internal

[9] Waaijman, Kees. "Allí me hirió el amor. Study of the poem 'By the Waters of Babylon' Saint John of the Cross." *Studies in Spirituality*. Peeters.

enemies. Suffering is a way to learn to be free from personal bonds and value what is important: love.

Jeremiah: suffering for the mission to transform the hearts of the people

The Lord called Jeremiah for a mission:
Jeremiah 1:4-5. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying: Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto the nations.

God calls all of us for our missions in our lives.
However, Jeremiah was aware of his limitations:

Jeremiah 1:6. And I said: Ah, ah, ah, Lord God: behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.

Despite his limitations, God trusted in him and anointed him:

Jeremiah 1:7-10. And the Lord said to me: Say not: I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee: and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid at their presence: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and the Lord said to me: Behold I have given my words in thy mouth: Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root up, and pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant.

We may feel like Jeremiah: we want to do good and have a mission in our lives, but we know our limitations.

Jeremiah suffered and was close to death; he paid a high price for trusting in the Lord, for following Him:

> Jeremiah 37:15-16. Wherefore the princes were angry with Jeremias, and they beat him, and cast him into the prison that was in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for he was chief over the prison. So Jeremias went into the house of the prison, and into the dungeon: and Jeremias remained there many days.
>
> Jeremiah 38:6. Then they took Jeremias and cast him into the dungeon of Melchias the son of Amelech, which was in the entry of the prison: and they let down Jeremias by ropes into the dungeon, wherein there was no water, but mire. And Jeremias sunk into the mire.

Jeremiah was exhausted, depressed, and he honestly complained to God:

> Jeremiah 20:7-9. Thou hast deceived me, O Lord, and I am deceived: thou hast been stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I am become a laughing-stock all the day, all scoff at me. For I am speaking now this long time, crying out against iniquity, and I often proclaim devastation: and the word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day. Then I said: I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: and there came in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was wearied, not being able to bear it.
>
> Jeremiah 20:14-16. Cursed be the day wherein I was borne: let not the day in which my mother bore me, be blessed. Cursed be the man that brought the tidings to my father, saying: A man child is born to thee: and made him greatly rejoice. Let that man

> be as the cities that the Lord hath overthrown, and hath not repented: let him hear a cry in the morning, and howling at noontide.
>
> Jeremiah 20:17-18. Who slew me not from the womb, that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb an everlasting conception. Why came I out of the womb, to see labour and sorrow, and that my days should be spent in confusion?

We complain to God, too, sometimes we scream and cry. Despite his exhaustion, Jeremiah persevered on his mission: to place the law of the Lord in human hearts.

> Jeremiah 31:1, 5. At that time, saith the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of and they shall be my people. Thou shalt yet plant vineyards in the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and they shall not gather the vintage before the time.
>
> Jeremiah 31:31,33. Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah's story had a happy ending, as he bought a new farm even though the Chaldeans were invading the Israelites:

> Jeremiah 32:8. And Hanameel my uncle's son cam to me, according to the word of the to the entry of the prison, and said me: Buy my held, which is in in the land of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thins, and thou art next of kin to possess it. And I understood this was the word of the Lord.

Ezekiel completed Jeremiah's call:

> Ezekiel 11:19-20. And I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit in their bowels: and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: That they may walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments, and do them: and that they may be my people, and I may be their God.
>
> Ezekiel 36:26. "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

The New Testament: a missionary meaning of suffering, for a higher purpose

Many people practice spirituality to "seek peace," as Peter said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

The New Testament provides valuable sources to understand the meaning of suffering: suffering for a higher purpose.

The Holy Family suffered the exile to Egypt and suffered the consequences of Jesus' mission, passion, and death. Jesus accepted the cross. The apostles had painful experiences and paid their faith with painful deaths.

Suffering in the building of the Kingdom, Jesus helps suffering people, shares their suffering

Louis Bouyer[10] shows how Matthew emphasized the existential dimension of building the Kingdom of God, providing meaning to our life.

For Bouyer, the Kingdom shows the "secret design for human history;" it provides windows, symbols, metaphors to guide our lives. In the parables related to the Kingdom, Jesus describes different dimensions of how to reach the Kingdom.

Matthias Neuman[11] discusses how a true Christian spirit of prayer should help deal with good and bad times and happiness and suffering. Suffering often leads to prayer, to request to be relieved from suffering. The Gospels provide wisdom on how Jesus helps suffering people, sick people, sharing their suffering: he put his finger in the man's ears, he touched his tongue with mud, he cries for the dead Lazarus. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he said to apostles, "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death," "Abba!" (which means "daddy"), "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it." (Mk 14:32-36). During his Passion, Jesus prepared us for our Christian life for our moments of suffering as part of our salvation way, when He cried on despair, on the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34).

Philo of Alexandria stressed how the scriptures provide meaning to our lives as part of the spiritual journey described above: God created us, and we go toward God as the end of our lives.

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[10] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York.

[11] Neuman O.S.B., Matthias. *Prayer and Suffering.* © 2016 American Theological Library Association

The Beatitudes: spirituality, love, and suffering may lead to happiness

The Beatitudes revealed by Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount express how spirituality, love, and suffering may lead to happiness:

> Matthew 5:4,6,10-12. "Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Jurgen Moltmann presents a meaning of suffering:

> It seems to me that today we need people who will travel into the inner wilderness of the soul and wander through the abysses of the self to battle with demons and experience the victory of Christ—or simply to establish an inner space for life, and through their own experience open up the way for others. In this context that means finding positive meaning in loneliness, silence, inner emptiness, suffering, poverty.[12]

Suffering with Christ, sharing his mission

Several passages of the New Testament provide a missionary meaning of suffering, as sharing Jesus mission, suffering with Him for the salvation of humanity:

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[12] Moltmann, Jurgen. Theology of mystical experience. Scot. *Journal of Theology*. Vol. 32, fip. 301-520. Translated by Alasdair Heron. p. 505.

Matthew 10:38-39. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it.

Matthew 16:24-25. Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.

Romans 8:16-18. For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.

1 Corinthians 4:10-13. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we without honour. Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode; And we labour, working with our own hands: we are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it. We are blasphemed, and we entreat; we are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all even until now.

2 Corinthians 1:3-6. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation; that we also may be able to comfort them who are in all distress, by the exhortation wherewith we also are exhorted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us: so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. Now whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation:

or whether we be exhorted, it is for your exhortation and salvation, which worketh the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

Philippians 1:29. For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

Philippians 3:8-11. Furthermore I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ:And may be found in him, not having my justice, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ Jesus, which is of God, justice in faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, If by any means I may attain to the resurrection which is from the dead.

Colossians 1:24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church.

1 Peter 2:21. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.

1 Peter 4:16. But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

Acts 7:55-59. But he [Stephen], filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears,

> and rushed upon him together. They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."[13]

God suffers with us when we suffer

Donald F. Duclow[14] explains how for Meister Eckhart, the real consolation to suffering is the knowledge that God is with us, especially a God who suffers with us, suffers for us, a God who could transform suffering into redemption. As Eckhart stated: "God is with us when we suffer and suffers with us."[15]

Michael J. Dodds also defends that when we suffer, God suffers with us. He quotes:

> Alfred North Whitehead describes God as the "fellow sufferer who understands." Ulrich Eibach maintains that "a God who cannot suffer cannot be close to the suffering creature." Jürgen Moltmann argues that "the one who cannot suffer cannot love either," and John Macquarrie concludes that "a God of love is inevitably vulnerable, for there is no love that does not suffer."[16]

Dodds proves God suffering in the statements:

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[13] *The New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. https://bible.usccb.org/bible

[14] Duclow, Donald F. "My suffering is God": Meister Eckhart's Book of Divine Consolation. *Theological Studies* 44 (1983)

[15] Fontaine, Carole R. "'Arrows of the Almighty' (Job 6:4): Perspectives on Pain." *Anglican Theological Review*. ART/LXVI:3. pp 243-248

[16] Michael J. Dodds, O.P. Thomas Aquinas, human suffering, and the unchanging God of love. Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, Berkeley, *California. Theological Studies* 52. 1991. p. 331.

> (Matthew 25:35-40) "I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger... I was naked... I was sick... I was in prison."
>
> (Acts 9:4-8) "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?... I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.'"

In both cases, God suffered not based on sympathy or compassion: He suffered Himself entirely. Dodds contrasts a person's suffering watching a sad movie to a mother's suffering for her child.

Thomas G. Weinandy[17] discusses how Platonism and Scholasticism wrongly proposed an impassible God, static, inert, self-sufficient, immutable. However, this is not what the Bible says:

> God is sorry that he created human beings (Gen. 6:6-7) or that he appointed Saul king (1 Sam. 15:11, 35) because they have become sinful. He relents of his anger and threatened punishment of the Ninevites (Jon. 4:2) or of the Israelites because they have repented (Ex. 32:14). God has emotional reactions, God changes his mind. Elie Wiesel tells a horrific story of a Jewish boy hung by the Nazis; it took half an hour for the youth to die and, as the men of the camp watched his torment, one asked: 'Where is God now?' Wiesel heard a voice within him answer: 'Where is he? He is here. He is hanging there on the gallows. Moltmann exploited the story to argue for a God who suffers in union with those who suffer. He mercifully heard the cry of his enslaved people in Egypt and determined to rescue them. God revealed himself, especially in the prophets, to be a God who grieved over the sins of his people. He was distressed by their unfaithfulness and suffered over their sinful plight. So disheartened was God by their

[17] Weinandy, Thomas G. (2002) Does God Suffer? *Ars Disputandi*, 2:1, 1-13, DOI: 10.1080/15665399.2002.10819720. Published by Taylor & Francis.

> hard-heartedness that he actually became angry. However, 'my heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not mortal; the Holy One in your midst and I will not come in wrath' (Hos. 11:89). Ultimately it is the revelation of his love that demands that God suffer. Moltmann writes: 'Were God incapable of suffering in any respect, and therefore in an absolute sense, then he would also be incapable of love.[18]

The meaning of suffering for Dionysius the Areopagite: suffering as part of our spiritual journey, purification – illumination – union

Dionysius the Areopagite, relying on Neoplatonism, considers suffering as part of our journey toward our assimilation to God, union with God through three stages: purification, illumination, union, which require three spiritualities: symbolic, cataphatic, apophatic.

Ysabel de Andia[19] explains how Dionysius considered suffering as part of knowing by experience, which was common in Greek literature, especially in the tragedians: "Aristotle on the Mysteries [states that] 'The initiates ought not to learn something but undergo emotions'."[20] In the eulogy to his master he wrote: "He was initiated by a more divine inspiration, not only knowing but suffering things divine [Jesus passion], and as a consequence of his sympathy with them."[21]

This leads the soul into a journey toward perfection:

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[18] Ibid. p. 7.

[19] Andia, Ysabel de. Dionysius as a Mystic. The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite. Edited by Mark Edwards, Dimitrios Pallis, and Georgios Steiris. Mar 2022 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198810797.013.39 p. 2.

[20] Ibid. p. 2.

[21] Ibid. p. 3.

> Thus, I believe, it is necessary that those who receive the purification be totally free of all mixture and exempt from every alloy of unlikeness—that those who receive the illumination be filled with light divine and raised, by the perfectly pure gaze of their spirit, right up to the state and power of contemplation,—and that those who receive perfection, having abandoned the deficient, be admitted to participation in the perfective science of the sacred mysteries, of which they have enjoyed the highest contemplation.[22]

These three stages or three ways of our spiritual life require three spiritualities: symbolic, cataphatic, apophatic.

Through the reality that we perceive through our senses, the symbolic spirituality can see God behind the reality, a world that fully reflects God.

Through purification, we move to a more profound cataphatic spirituality, that of illumination; we express God's attributes through the Divine Names of God as his book expressed; however, we realize that such spirituality is imperfect, unable to express an infinite God.

And then we enter into an apophatic spirituality, a spirituality of rest, contemplation, silence, simplicity.

de Andia explains Moses mystical experience in the Mount Sinai:

> There where the simple, absolute, and immutable mysteries of theology have been buried in the superluminous Darkness of the silence which is the initiator of the secret'. In 'mystical theology', the mysteries of theology are 'buried in the Darkness'; they are not the object of any speech, but of silence, which is the sole initiator of the secret, for the sole initiation into mystical theology is silence.

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[22] Ibid. p. 5.

Dionysius desires to enter into this Darkness which he defines as 'the most stupendous light'—Darkness by excess of light—and this light 'swells the intellect's whose eyes are closed with the splendours of all beauty.

In the Mystical Theology the know Daring subject, whom we shall designate the Moses-intellect, becomes 'blind'. The entry into the Darkness is accompanied by that which the later mystics will call the 'binding of the senses'.

The recommendation is at once positive and negative: 'renounce at the same time the senses and the intellectual activities, all that is sensible and all that is intelligible, all that is and all that is not, and elevate yourself, so far as is possible, in unknowing towards the union with Him who is above all essence and knowledge.

The 'mystical contemplations' are therefore already higher than the 'sensations' and the 'intellectual activities' and it is by a 'sustained application' of these that the renunciation of the sensible and intelligible, and even of being and non- being, is possible. On the other hand, the 'elevation' is a 'straining' towards union with 'Him who is above all essence and all knowledge'. This union is effected 'in an unknowable manner' or'in unknowing'. This is the goal that is set before Timothy and fixed in the Mystical Theology. Nevertheless, the elevation requires an ecstasy:

For it is by an ecstasy wholly unbound and detached from all and from yourself that you will be raised to the superessential radiance of the divine Darkness, after having put all things away and having detached yourself from all.[23]

[23] Ibid. pp. 9, 10.

As Alonzo L. Gaskill[24] explains how Robert Davis Hughes uses the threefold way as waves crashing on the shore to suggest a cyclical, rather than linear, way of approaching the stages:

> Purification (in Greek, katharsis) suggests a kind of spiritual detoxification, a process of letting go of anything that stands in the way of growth in grace--a logical starting point for any serious exploration of contemplation. This leads to illumination (theoria), or contemplation proper, where the cleansed soul is now open to beholding the beauty of the divine mystery; a process which in turn releases into perfection or union (theosis), a profound, graced state of nonduality where God and the created soul are "not-two."[25]

Carl McColman[26] provides a view of purification as a process of detachment, of letting go, toward freedom and intimacy with God:

> We tend to associate catharsis with art: the idea of a work of art facilitating the release of powerful emotions. To use a rather down-to-earth example, think of horror movies. We watch the scary movie to flush out our own capacity for fear. It gives us a safe way to feel afraid, to let go of that fear, and to rehearse its resolution (by the way the movie ends). In doing this, we are "purged" of our fear, even if only momentarily. We've experienced a catharsis.
>
> Contemplative catharsis works in a similar way, although not as dramatically (or as quickly) as watching a frightening movie.

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[24] Gaskill, Alonzo L. The Contemplative Life in Three Easy Steps. https://www.patheos.com/progressive-christian/contemplative-life-carl-mccolman-06-20-2012

[25] Ibid. p. 3.

[26] McColman, Carl. Why Do Mystics Talk About "Purgation" or "Purification"? https://anamchara.com/about-purification/ September 3, 2021

Giving ourselves to the ongoing process of prayer, meditation and contemplation typically leads to a process of releasing all sorts of interior thoughts, feelings, wounded memories, prejudices, biasses… slowly and gently, contemplation invites us into "meeting" all the emotional/cognitive baggage within us in a spirit of non-judgment and loving acceptance. By doing so, these tend to lose their power over us. We become more free — not only psychologically, but spiritually as well — more free to fully give ourselves to Divine Love, unencumbered (or at least, less encumbered) by the fear, rage, jealousy, bitterness, or other distracting emotions and passions that typically can keep us in a kind of self-enforced bondage.

So the purification process within contemplation is less about "purging incorrect beliefs or practices" and more about purging whatever inside us is constricting our capacity for freedom and intimacy with God.

So the contemplative or mystical process of purification is just that: a process. It's a journey, not a destination. It's an ongoing, developmental gesture of setting aside those aspects of our lives that constrict our spiritual freedom or thwart intimacy with God.

The way to walk the path of purgation is to not worry about it! Rather, place our efforts into seeking God through silence, stillness, reflection, unknowing, trust, compassion, and even darkness. Let's let God be God, and we can be simply human. By the gesture of opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit, we allow the Spirit to direct our journey, which includes the process of gradual, gentle letting-go of all that does not serve our freedom and intimacy with Love. It's a long, slow process, probably lifelong. [27]

[27] Ibid. pp. 5-9.

The meaning of suffering for Saint Augustine: suffering as part of our transformation journey toward union with God

Louis Bouyer[28] explains the role of spirituality in Saint Augustine's. He was influenced by his mother, the Christian Saint Monica, by Eastern Christian spirituality through Saint Jerome and Saint Ambrose, by Simplicianus, his spiritual father, by reading the story of Saint Anthony, the scriptures, by good companions, and by the spiritual orientation of Neoplatonist philosophy.

As Andrew Louth explains, Neoplatonism had a significant impact on Augustine:

> On the doctrine of the soul, through purification and contemplation it can rise to God, and the sense of man's frailty and his need for some kind of assistance in his search for God [...] We find the path of the soul's ascent to God mapped out in Neoplatonic terms: it is movement of withdrawal from the world and into oneself, a movement that involves purification and the acquiring of the virtues, leading to contemplation to God.[29]

The Neoplatonic personal journey toward God triggers a personal transformation through knowledge, virtues, interior repose, entering into the divine light, contemplation, being entirely immersed in God, and forgetting everything else.

In his Exposition on Psalm 42, Augustine states:

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[28] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York. pp. 469-474.

[29] Jones, Cheslyn; Wainwright, Geoffrey; Yarnold, S.J., Edward. *The study of spirituality.* Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford. 1986. pp 136-137

> "My soul is thirsty for the living God Psalm 41:2." What I am saying, that as the hart pants after the water-brooks, so longs my soul after You, O God, means this, My soul is thirsty for the living God. For what is it thirsty? When shall I come and appear before God? This it is for which I am thirsty, to come and to appear before Him. I am thirsty in my pilgrimage, in my running; I shall be filled on my arrival. But When shall I come? And this, which is soon in the sight of God, is late to our longing. When shall I come and appear before God? This too proceeds from that longing, of which in another place comes that cry, One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Wherefore so? That I may behold (he says) the beauty of the Lord. When shall I come and appear before the Lord?[30]

The Neoplatonic notions of a journey toward our end, to the One, dwelling on God's house, are present in the Exposition:

> My tears have been my meat day and night, while they daily say unto me, Where is your God? Psalm 41:3. My tears (he says) have been not bitterness, but my bread. Those very tears were sweet unto me: being thirsty for that fountain, inasmuch as I was not as yet able to drink of it, I have eagerly made my tears my meat.
>
> I thought on these things, and poured out my soul above myself Psalm 41:4. When would my soul attain to that object of its search, which is above my soul, if my soul were not to pour itself out above itself? For were it to rest in itself, it would not see anything else beyond itself; and in seeing itself, would not, for all that, see God. I seek my God in every corporeal nature, terrestrial or celestial, and find Him not: I seek His Substance in my own soul, and I find it not, yet still I have thought on these

[30] Saint Augustine. *Exposition on Psalm 42. 5.*

> things, and wishing to see the invisible things of my God, being understood by the things made, Romans 1:20 I have poured forth my soul above myself, and there remains no longer any being for me to attain to, save my God. For it is there is the house of my God. His dwelling-place is above my soul; from thence He beholds me; from thence He created me; from thence He directs me and provides for me; from thence he appeals to me, and calls me, and directs me; leads me in the way, and to the end of my way.[31]

Eastern apophatic theology is present in this passage: the absence of God drives us to move toward God in our transformation journey. The transformation journey toward love, toward perfection, leads us to battle against our limitations.

The meaning of suffering for Saint Francis: above all gifts of the Holy Spirit that Christ Jesus gives to his friends is the grace to overcome oneself, to accept willingly, out of love for Him, all contempt, all discomfort, all injury, and all suffering

As McGinn explains, Francis decided to live a poor life, wandering through the world, in full solidarity with the poor and outcasts, begging for alms, giving an example of peacefulness, poverty, humility, penance.[32] Saint Francis of Assisi explained to brother Leo what perfect joy is: living a full evangelical life, to the extreme:

> On a cold winter's day, Saint Francis walked with Brother Leo from Perugia to the Porziuncola. Because of their poverty, they suffered much in the cold. At one point, Saint Francis said to Brother Leo: "If God desired that the Friars Minor should serve as a great example of holiness to all people in all lands, please

[31] Saint Augustine. *Exposition on Psalm 42. 6.*
[32] Ibid. p. 45

write down that this would not be perfect joy." At some point later in their journey, Saint Francis said to Brother Leo: "If the Friars Minor could make the lame walk; if we could straighten the crooked; if we could chase away demons; if we could give sight to the blind and speech to the dumb; and even if we could raise the dead after four days, please write down and note carefully that this would not be perfect joy."

Soon after, Saint Francis said to Brother Leo: "If the Friars Minor could speak every language; if they knew everything about science; if they could explain all the scriptures; if they could predict the future and reveal the secrets of every soul, please write down and note carefully that this would not be perfect joy." After a few more steps, Saint Francis cried: "Brother Leo, little one of God! If the Friars Minor could sing like angels; if they could explain the movements of the stars; if they knew everything about all animals, birds, fish, plants, stones, trees, and all men, please write down and note carefully that this would not be perfect joy." Finally, Saint Francis cried again: "Brother Leo, if the Friars Minor could preach and thus convert every person to faith in Christ, please write down and note carefully that even this is not perfect joy."

When this manner of discourse lasted for several miles, Brother Leo, who had been thinking about these sayings, asked: "Father Francis, I pray that you will teach me about perfect joy." Saint Francis answered: "If we arrive at the Porziuncola and if we are drenched with rain and trembling with cold, covered in mud and exhausted from hunger; and if we knock on the convent gate; and if we are not recognized by the porter; and if he tells us that we are impostors who seek to deceive the world and steal from the poor; and if he refuses to open the gate; and if he leaves us outside, exposed to the rain and snow, suffering from cold and hunger; then if we embrace the injustice, cruelty, and contempt with patience, without complaining; and if we believe

in faith, love, and humility that the porter knew us but was told by God to reject us, then, my dear Brother Leo, please write down and note carefully that this also is perfect joy!"

Saint Francis then said: "Brother Leo, if we knock again and if the porter drives us away with curses and blows; and if he accuses us of robbery and other crimes; and if we embrace this with patience without complaining; and if we believe in faith, love, and humility that the porter knew us but was told by God to reject us again, then, my dear Brother Leo, please write down and note carefully that this is finally perfect joy!" Saint Francis said once more: "If urged by cold and hunger, we knock again; if we call again to the porter; if we plead to him with many tears to open the gate and to give us shelter out of love for God; and if he returns more angry than ever; and if he calls us annoying rascals and beats us with a knotted stick; and if he throws us to the ground, rolls us in the snow, and beats us again with the knotted stick; and if we bear these injuries with patience without complaining; and if we think upon the sufferings of our Blessed Crucified Lord, then, most beloved Brother Leo, please write down and note carefully that this, finally, is perfect joy!"

Finally, Saint Francis said: "Brother Leo, please listen to me. Above all gifts of the Holy Spirit, that Christ Jesus gives to his friends is the grace to overcome oneself, to accept willingly, out of love for Him, all contempt, all discomfort, all injury, and all suffering. In this and all other gifts, we ourselves should not boast because all things are gifts from God. Remember the words of Saint Paul: 'What do you have that you did not receive from God? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift (1 Corinthians 4:7)?' But in the cross of afflictions and suffering, we truly can glory because as Saint Paul says again: 'May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Galatians 6:14).' Amen."[33]

The meaning of suffering for Saint Thomas Aquinas, based on the Book of Job

Saint Thomas Aquinas[34] provides a profound reflection on the meaning of suffering in his "Commentary on the book of job."

The following paragraphs have been extracted and summarized from Saint Thomas's "Commentary on the book of job."

The limited human capacity to understand the origins of suffering

- "The Lord answered Job, out of the whirlwind." The whirlwind means that God responded either relying on natural realities or as an interior inspiration in Job's soul of his darkness and turmoil.
- "Gird up your loins like a man." It is a metaphor, asking Job to prepare for a journey or some work, removing every impediment of carnal desires which block spiritual attention.
- "Let me speak and you answer me." It invites man to humility, to recognize his ignorance, as Job cannot know the plan of the foundation of the earth, because when the earth was laid on its foundation, he did not yet exist in the nature of things.

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[33] Saint Francis of Assisi. "Saint Francis Explains Perfect Joy." Extracted from *The Assisi Project. A Fellowship of Franciscans in Spirit*. https://assisiproject.com/2018/06/23/saint-francis-explains-perfect-joy/

[34] Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the book of job*. Translated by Brian Mulladay. www.opwest.org/Archive/2002/Book_of_Job/tajob.html

- "Tell me, if you have understanding." Man cannot respond to what God's plans for creation are, cannot understand divine providence; man cannot understand the creation of the land, the waters, the air, the light, the day and night.

In conclusion, man's reason falls short of the comprehension of divine things, so it is clear that man is not suited to dispute with God.

Our incapacity to understand suffering is part of our incapacity to understand reality, to see the power of God, as an invitation to humility

- "Have you taken hold, and shaken out the ends of the earth?" Has man the power to control earthquakes?
- "Have you entered into the depths of the sea, and have you walked in the valley of the deep?" Has man access to the deepest part of the ocean?
- "Have the gates of death opened to you?" Can man control corruption and death?
- "Tell me, if you know everything, in which path does light dwell?" Human knowledge has a limited ability to move toward divine light out of the darkness of our limited knowledge.

In conclusion, these are all invitations to humility.

God speaks to us in our interiority

- "Who put wisdom in the bowels of man or who gave understanding to the cock?" It invites us to reflect on the intelligence and will that God gave to man and animals.

- "Who told him the reasoned order of the heavens and who will make the harmony of heaven sleep?" That harmony and predictability allow man and animals to learn to manage their lives.
- "Will you take the prey of the lioness and will you fill the soul of her cubs when they lie in their dens and lie in wait in the hollows? Who prepares his food for the crow when her little ones cry out to God stretching out because they have no food?" Man and animals can take care of their families based on a world created by God.
- "Do you know the time of the birth of the goats in the rocks?" God provides not only the faculties of men and animals but also their capacity to reproduce.

The following paragraphs describe many animals' faculties to show the greatness of divine wisdom and power that produces marvelous effects.

Thomas concludes:

> We should consider that if this discourse of the Lord to Job is not spoken in an exterior voice, but is by interior inspiration, Job is found to have spoken in three ways in this book.
>
> First, he represented the affective desire of the senses in his first loud complaint, when he says, "Let the day when I was born perish."
>
> Second, he expressed the deliberation of human reason when he disputed against his friends.
>
> Finally, he spoke according to divine inspiration when he introduced words from the person of God. Because human reason must be directed according to divine inspiration, when the Lord has spoken, Job reproves the words which he had said according to human reason.

God strengthens us in our weakness

- "If you have an arm like God." It expresses the divine power to sustain the good.
- "And if you thunder with a voice like his?" God uses this thunder to instruct the good.
- "Deck yourself with beauty." It expresses God's excellence; he shares his beauty, his clarity or truth, his simplicity, and perfection, that He participates to man.
- "…And lift yourself on high." As man is in a weak condition and requires that the divine majesty lifts him.
- "…And be glorious." It is not natural on man, but participated by God.
- "…And clothe yourself with splendid clothing." Participating in divine wisdom and justice, and so just as a man is adorned with splendid garments.
- "Pride is the beginning of all sin." After lifting the good men, God chastises the proud ones, as pride is the worst sin.
- "Scatter the proud in your fury… Consider all the proud and confound them… and destroy the wicked in their place… You will hide them in the decay together… and their faces plunge into the ditch." Destruction, confusion, decay, and death will be given to the proud.

The role of pride

- "He has been made to fear no one." Satan can not be harmed by a man.
- "He sees everything which is sublime, he is the king over the all the sons of pride." Satan is powerful, and full of pride, the source of pride in others, over those who are slaves of pride, who all follow his leadership. Man has to fear that the devil,

who desires to tempt us, tries in a special way to tempt us to pride, and thus to transfer us to his kingdom.

Therefore, he should beware of affection and words which have the flavor of pride.

The role of humility

- "Job answered the Lord and said: I know that you can do everything, and no thought is hidden from you." Job confesses the divine excellence with respect to power, God could remove the adversity brought on by the devil,
- "Who is the man who foolishly hides his plan without your knowledge?" Job assails those who deny divine providence
- "So I have spoken foolishly, about things which far exceed by knowledge. I will ask you, my ear heard you." From the consideration of the divine excellence he proceeds to consider his own fault.
- "I do penance in dust and ashes." To expiate pride, Job takes a humble action.

Job indeed has grown both from his suffering and from divine revelation.

Epilogue

- "And the Lord supported the person of Job. The Lord also was turned, by the penance of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Although Job did not put his hope in recovering earthly prosperity but in attaining future happiness, the Lord still restored him abundantly to temporal prosperity. He

would give an example to others that they might convert to God.

- "And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before came to him." God did it to restore Job's good reputation
- "The Lord blessed the last days of Job, more than his first days. Job lived after his trials one hundred and forty years." Job's prosperity lasted until his death, with abundance both of the goods of fortune and the goods of grace, which led him to the future glory which endures forever and ever.

The meaning of suffering for Saint John of the Cross: suffering as a driver of our spiritual journey, purification – illumination - union

In the Spiritual Canticle, after the creatures answer the soul describing God's beauty, goodness, truth, and love, the soul feels that the natural beauty and perfection of the reality is not enough, that it does not fill their heart:

> Oh! who can heal me? Give me perfectly Yourself, Send me no more A messenger Who cannot tell me what I wish.
>
> All they who serve are telling me Of Your unnumbered graces; And all wound me more and more, And something leaves me dying, I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.
>
> But how you persevere, O life! Not living where you live; The arrows bring death Which you receive From your conceptions of the Beloved.
>
> Why, after wounding This heart, have You not healed it? And why, after stealing it, Have You thus abandoned it, And not carried away the stolen prey?

> Quench my troubles, For no one else can soothe them; And let my eyes behold You, For You are their light, And I will keep them for You alone.[35]

The meaning of suffering in "The Dark Night," as part of the journey of the soul to union with God

David Sanderlin[36] discusses how Saint John of the Cross's apophatic spirituality is strongly connected with faith's virtue.

Regarding love, John states that we become like God through the Dark Night of contemplation, as we want to love in conformity with God's love. We are united with God through faith, as our knowledge is not like God's knowledge. We can know God in a limited way through "divine touches," spiritual experiences. Although our intellect remains in the dark unknowing, faith brings us to believe divinely revealed truths that transcend every natural light and infinitely exceed all human understanding.

As Wojtyła[37] explains:

> "What we here call night," he says, "is a deprivation of the pleasure of the appetite in all things." Here the word "night" has a general meaning; it signifies the privation of the pleasure of any appetite or desire. But later Saint John of the Cross distinguishes the various types of appetible goods and further specifies various

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[35] John of the Cross. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

[36] Sanderlin, David. Faith and ethical reasoning in the mystical theology of St John of the Cross: a reasonable Christian mysticism. *Religious Studies*. 25, pp. 317-333.

[37] Wojtyła, Karol. *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*. Translated by Jordan Aumann, O.P. The original text "Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce" was a doctoral thesis presented at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome. Wipf & Stock, Oregon. 1981

> nights according to the particular privations. The reason for using the term "night" is that, just as night designates the privation of the light by means of which objects are visible to us, so metaphorically it signifies the privation of the psychological light whereby naturally desirable objects are presented to the appetite and thus stimulate a desire for them. Thus, Saint John states that "the mortification of desire may be called a night of the soul, for when it is deprived of the pleasure of the appetite in all things, the soul remains, as it were, empty and in darkness." We also find here the notion of "mortification." However, night does not have exactly the same meaning as mortification. It refers only to the emptiness of the faculty which, deprived of its connatural object and, as it were, of its own proper light, remains in darkness. Such is the concept of night, a concept that is fundamental in the doctrine of Saint John of the Cross. It is, as we have seen, a psychological concept that describes the condition of a faculty deprived of its proper object.[38]

Wojtyła[39] states that the Dark Night is the journey made by the soul to union with God. It is a night first of the senses and the intellect, a privation of anything other than God. It is a journey that leads to a union with God based on faith, obscure and dark:

> Contemplation can never be anything more than a "secret wisdom of God; for it is secret even to the understanding that receives it. For that reason Saint Dionysius calls it a ray of darkness. Knowledge through faith is obscure, not clear. In faith God is a hidden God. God manifests himself to the soul in divine light that surpasses all understanding. Therefore, the greater the faith of the soul, the more closely it is united with God. Contemplation, which is a general, vague and dark but loving knowledge

[38] Ibid. p. 97.
[39] Ibid.

> that 'is given in faith,' is by its very definition something intimately connected with the virtue of faith."[40]

As Wojtyła[41] states, Saint John was influenced by authors such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory the Great, The Imitation of Christ, spiritual writers of Germany, and the Low Countries, Saint Thomas Aquinas, but above all, his personal experience. Wojtyła summarized in his dissertation:

> By means of testimony verified for the most part by Saint John's personal experience, we learn what faith is as a means of union with God. The works of Saint John of the Cross are not simply a series of speculative treatises; rather, they are, the testimony of experience, and their aim is to trace and illumine the path that leads to mystical union. To achieve this, the Saint expressed himself in poetry and then later wrote commentaries on the poems.[42]
>
> Saint John of the Cross has educated generations of faithful in contemplative prayer which he calls "knowledge or loving awareness" of God and of the mysteries which He has revealed to us. He would have us always pray with a gaze of faith and contemplative love. He educates the soul for a simplified kind of interior union with Christ: "Since God, then, as the giver communes with him through a simple, loving knowledge, the individual also, as the receiver, communes with God through a simple and loving knowledge or attention, so that knowledge is thus joined with knowledge and love with love."[43]

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[40] Ibid. p. 62.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid. p. 24.

[43] John Paul II. *Master in the Faith.* Apostolic Letter of His Holiness John Paul II on the occasion of the iv centenary of the death of Saint John of The Cross. p. 3.

The universal experience of feeling abandoned by God

Wojtyła[44] explains why John poems are valuable for all:

> John appeals today to many believers and non-believers because he describes the dark night as an experience which is typically human and Christian. Our age has known times of anguish which have made us understand this expression better and which have furthermore given it a kind of collective character. Our age speaks of the silence or absence of God. It has known so many calamities, so much suffering inflicted by wars and by the destruction of so many innocent beings. The term dark night is now used of all of life and not just of a phase of the spiritual journey. The Saint's doctrine is now invoked in response to this unfathomable mystery of human suffering. […] Physical, moral and spiritual suffering, like sickness—like the plagues of hunger, like war, injustice, solitude, the lack of meaning in life, the very fragility of human existence, the sorrowful knowledge of sin, the seeming absence of God—are for the believer all purifying experiences which might be called night of faith. To this experience Saint John of the Cross has given the symbolic and evocative name dark night, and he makes it refer explicitly to the light and obscurity of the mystery of faith.
>
> The feeling that God is silent or absent, whether voiced as an accusation or as a complaint, is an almost spontaneous reaction to the experience of pain and injustice. The very people who do not credit God with their joy hold Him responsible in detail for human suffering. He is silent and hides Himself sometimes because He has already spoken and manifested Himself with suf-

[44] Ibid.

ficient clarity. Even the experience of His absence can communicate faith, love, and hope to one who humbly and meekly opens himself to God. The Saint writes:

> The soul wore this white tunic of faith when it departed on the dark night and walked ... in the midst of interior darkness and straits ... and suffered with constancy and perseverance, passing through these trials without growing discouraged or failing the Beloved. The Beloved so proves the faith of His bride in tribulations that she can afterwards truthfully declare what David says: Because of the words of your lips I have kept hard ways (Ps 16:4).

John wrote some of the most sublime pages in Christian literature on the mystery of the abandonment of Christ on the Cross. Christ experienced suffering in all its rigor right up until His death on the Cross. In those last moments, extreme physical and psychological and spiritual pain combine to wreak all their fury upon him: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" This atrocious suffering, provoked by hate and lies, has a profound redemptive value. It was ordained so "as to pay the debt fully and bring man to union with God." By means of His loving surrender to the Father in the moment of extreme abandonment and of greatest love, "He accomplished the most marvelous work of His whole life, surpassing all the works and deed and miracles that Me had ever performed on earth or in heaven; that is, He brought about the reconciliation and union of the human race with God through grace."[45]

[45] Ibid. p. 3.

As Louis Roy[46] explains, Saint John of the Cross described the absence of God, the feeling that God rejected, abandoned the soul, leading to emptiness, both temporal, natural, and spiritual. However, it slowly comes an experience of an increase in light and love.

David Sanderlin analyzes the need of the Dark Night to increase love, the need to "empty personal desires for temporal goods to desire and love God above all things, unconditionally, desiring nothing in this life in return."[47] Love requires detachment, disinterest

The meaning of suffering for Thomas Merton. The desert is the place to connect to our inner lives, to others, to build authenticity

Gerald J. Schiffhorst describes how Thomas Merton had "a personal desert experience of psychological anguish, anxiety, and depression, withdrawal, solitude, alienation, and despair that resulted in his discovery of his true self."[48]

For Merton, the Dark Night of the Soul of John of the Cross led him to a desert:

> A land without a way, which is ultimately the path to love, a remarkably deep and vast wilderness, an immense, unbounded desert. The abandonment one experiences in "the desert" ends up being more fruitful than thought possible, as Belden C. Lane

[46] Roy, Louis. The experience of the absence of god according to John of the Cross. *The Way*, 55/1 (January 2016), 89–98

[47] Sanderlin, David. Charity according to St. John of the Cross. A Disinterested Love for Interesting Special Relationships, Including Marriage. *Journal of Religious Ethics*. p. 92.

[48] Schiffhorst. Gerald J. *Thomas Merton's Desert Spirituality*. University of Central Florida. Orlando. © 2016 American Theological Library Association. p. 1.

> shows: This is the paradox of the negative way: it always points back to affirmation.[49]

As Schiffhorst describes, the desert is necessary for all people, not just the monks, to look inside, to connect to others at a deeper level, the friendly communion of silence. Contemplative prayer leads to transcending language to encounter God in the desert, away from all distractions:

> Society depends for its existence on the inviolable personal solitude of its members. Society [...] must be made up not of numbers [...] but of persons. To be a person implies responsibility and freedom, and both of these imply a certain interior solitude, a sense of personal integrity, a sense of one's own reality and of one's ability to give himself to society.[50]

The meaning of suffering for Viktor Frankl. A man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss in the contemplation of his beloved

Viktor Frankl, who spent three years in the Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp during World War II, who lost most of his family in the camp, including his pregnant wife, in 1946 wrote his famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning.* He provides profound insights into the meaning of suffering: "In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice."[51]

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[49] Ibid. pp. 4-5.

[50] Merton, Thomas. *Preface to Thoughts in Solitude*. p. 13.

[51] Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning. An Introduction to Logotherapy*. Washington Square Press Publication of Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc. New York, NY. 1959. p. 135.

For Frankl[52], the way we deal with suffering defines who we are: whether we deal with dignity and generosity, whether we find meaning even suffering, dying, privation and death, or as a bitter fight, as an animal. What is the meaning of our lives, our responsibility to our loved ones, or the value of our work?

> What matters above all is the attitude we take toward suffering, the attitude in which we take suffering upon ourselves suffering ceases to be suffering in some way at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of sacrifice.[53]
>
> A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth - that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way - an honorable way - in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, "The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory."[54]

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[52] Ibid. p. 88.
[53] Ibid. pp. 178-179.
[54] Ibid. p. 57.

The meaning of suffering for Edward Schillebeeckx. The positive effects of suffering: wisdom, transformation, presence of God

Kathleen McManus[55] explains how Edward Schillebeeckx presents Mel Gibson's "The Passion" and how an agonizing Jesus confronted when one of the others crucified with Jesus asked Him this question: Why do you embrace your cross, you fool? And the response is: for love; He embraces our lives and sufferings to give us life and happiness.

Schillebeeckx states that suffering can enrich our lives. It leads us to create wisdom, to change our hearts, to transformation. Suffering led people to Jesus, who healed them, stating, "Go, your faith has made you well" (Mark 10:52). Suffering leads to faith, and faith leads to healing and conversion, the elimination of suffering. He overcame suffering at the cross by trusting and having faith in his Father, who led his resurrection, the beginning of a new life. Suffering leads to the presence of God, to conversion, to change our hearts, to change our lives, to change the meanings of our lives, to human solidarity.

Helen Bergin[56] provides similar insights on Schillebeeckx's theology of suffering. Suffering provides epistemological power and superior wisdom beyond rationality, new meanings, and new roads to knowledge. Suffering triggers action, transformation, which leads to finding the causes of suffering and strategies to overcome it. Suffering leads to discovering a God that promotes beauty and goodness against evil, a God concerned with humanity, against suffering. Suffering is part of life, but it is disruptive, destructive, and for that, it

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55 McManus, Kathleen. Embracing life, embracing the cross. Edward Schillebeeckx and Suffering. Theological Trends. *The Way*, 44/1 (January 2005), 61-73.

56 Bergin, Helen. Edward Schillebeeckx and the Suffering Human Being. *International Journal of Public Theology* 4 (2010) 466-482 brill.nl/ijpt

triggers us to re-think, re-create, to have faith and trust in a God who heals us.

Robin Ryan[57] explains that Schillebeeckx considers that suffering can have positive effects, leading to greater spiritual maturity, reinforcing our empathy for others' suffering, and the role of faith and trust in God. Psalm 22 expresses how Jesus felt at the cross:

> "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why so far from my call for help, from my cries of anguish? My God, I call by day, but you do not answer; by night, but I have no relief."

But after describing his desolation at the cross, "They have pierced my hands and my feet, I can count all my bones," Psalm 22 ends by showing God's response to His suffering. "All descendants of Jacob, give honor; show reverence, all descendants of Israel! For he has not spurned or disdained the misery of this poor wretch, Did not turn away from me, but heard me when I cried out."

Ryan concludes, faith and trust in the moments of suffering lead to God's action to deliver from pain. For Schillebeeckx, suffering must lead Christians to have a unique sensibility with suffering people: we cannot understand suffering, but we can have a positive way to confront it:

> When a person is confronted with inexplicable suffering and the question of the 'why' of this suffering will not go away, perhaps Schillebeeckx's advice about prayer in this situation is as helpful as anything that can be said: 'It prayer shouldn't continue with your saying: God must have an intention here, but rather with your saying: we are still in God's hands, even in grim situations

[57] Ryan CP, Robin. *Holding On To the Hand of God: Edward Schillebeeckx on the Mystery of Suffering*. DOI: 10. Ill 1/j. 1741 -2005.2007.00199.x

like this one. This terrible event isn't the last word. And you have to say that with all the strength that is in your being.[58]

The meaning of suffering for Peter Kreeft: suffering as the battle against evil

Peter Kreeft frames the problem of suffering by stating that there are three kinds of evil:

Suffering, which is a disharmony or alienation between ourselves as embodied creatures and something in this physical world.

Death, which is the disharmony or separation between the soul and the body.

Sin, which is the disharmony or alienation between the soul and God.[59]

He provides ten "easy" answers to the problem of evil:

Denials of God reality. Atheism: no God. Demythologism: the fairy tale God. Psychologism: the subjective God.

Denials of God's power. Old (polytheistic) Paganism: many Gods. New (scientistic) Paganism: naturalistic Gods. Dualism: two Gods.

Denials of God's goodness. Satanism: the bad God. Pantheism: the blob God. Deism: the snob God.

Denial of evil. Idealism.[60]

He explains different responses coming from different sources:

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[58] Ibid. p. 125.

[59] Kreeft, Peter. *Making sense out of suffering*. Servant Books. Michigan, 1986. p. 24.

[60] Ibid. p. 29.

> Seven clues from the philosophers: Socrates: intellectual humility; Plato: no evil can happen to a good man; Aristotle: happiness is not a warm puppy; Boethius: all fortune is good fortune; Freud: the life-wish versus the death-wish; Marcel: hope; C.S. Lewis: the Principle of First and Second Things.
>
> Seven clues from the artists: Children's stories: suffering makes you real; Fairy tales: good stories need monsters and mystery; The myths: paradise lost Greek dramas: wisdom through suffering; Science fiction: freedom versus happiness; Creative artists: birth pangs; The poets: death as a lover and death as birth.
>
> Eight clues from the prophets: Moses: who started it?; Abraham: faith suffers; Samuel: suffering speeds history's cycle; Jeremiah: there are no good people; Hosea: suffering is not a love song; Joel: the day of the Lord; Isaiah: Messiah, atonement, and resurrection; John the Baptist: the Lamb of God.
>
> Lessons from the saints: The Cross is a gift God gives to his friends; Suffering is grace; Be it done to me according to Thy word; Humility and gratitude; Faith; Weakness makes strength; The ultimate theology of suffering: the Trinity.[61]

Kreeft states that the core of Christian response to suffering is that it brings believers close to God, to the person of Jesus:

> In summary, Jesus did three things to solve the problem of suffering. First, he came. He suffered with us. He wept. Second, in becoming man he transformed the meaning of our suffering: it is now part of his work of redemption. Our death pangs become birth pangs for heaven, not only for ourselves but also for those we love. Third, he died and rose. Dying, he paid the price for sin and opened heaven to us; rising, he transformed death from a hole into a door, from an end into a beginning.

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[61] Ibid. Extracted from the entire book.

> That third thing, now-resurrection. It makes more than all the difference in the world. Many condolences begin by saying something like this: "I know nothing can bring back your dear one again, but ..." No matter what words follow, no matter what comforting psychology follows that "but," Christianity says something to the bereaved that makes all the rest trivial, something the bereaved longs infinitely more to hear: God can and will bring back your dear one again to life. There is resurrection.[62]

The meaning of suffering for Harold Kushner

Rabbi Harold Kushner's son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease when he was three years old and died at fourteen.

Kushner expresses the need to find a meaning to suffering:

> The misfortunes of good people are not only a problem to the people who suffer and to their families. They are a problem to everyone who wants to believe in a just and fair and livable world. They inevitably raise questions about the goodness, the kindness, even the existence of God.
>
> I am the rabbi of a congregation of six hundred families, or about twenty five hundred people. I visit them in the hospital, I officiate at their funerals, I try to help them through the wrenching pain of their divorces, their business failures, their unhappiness with their children. I sit and listen to them pour out their stories of terminally ill husbands or wives, of senile parents for whom a long life is a curse rather than a blessing, of seeing people whom they love contorted with pain or buried by frustration. And I find it very hard to tell them that life is fair, that God gives people what they deserve and need.[63]

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[62] Ibid. p. 138.

[63] Kushner, Harold S. *When bad things happen to good people.* Anchor books. New York. 1981. p. 9.

However, it is difficult to find the meaning of suffering:

> All the responses to tragedy which we have considered have at least one thing in common. They all assume that God is the cause of our suffering, and they try to understand why God would want us to suffer. Is it for our own good, or is it a punishment we deserve, or could it be that God does not care what happens to us? Many of the answers were sensitive and imaginative, but none was totally satisfying. Some led us to blame ourselves in order to spare God's reputation. Others asked us to deny reality or to repress our true feelings. We were left either hating ourselves for deserving such a fate, or hating God for sending it to us when we did not deserve it.
>
> There may be another approach. Maybe God does not cause our suffering. Maybe it happens for some reason other than the will of God. The psalmist writes, "I lift mine eyes to the hills; from where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, maker of Heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1–2) He does not say, "My pain comes from the Lord," or "my tragedy comes from the Lord." He says "my help comes from the Lord."
>
> Could it be that God does not cause the bad things that happen to us? Could it be that He doesn't decide which families shall give birth to a handicapped child, that He did not single out Ron to be crippled by a bullet or Helen by a degenerative disease, but rather that He stands ready to help them and us cope with our tragedies if we could only get beyond the feelings of guilt and anger that separate us from Him? Could it be that "How could God do this to me?" is really the wrong question for us to ask?[64]

The final chapter provides a solution to the difficulty to find the meaning, which is, to focus on how to respond to suffering:

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[64] Ibid pp. 26-27.

In the final analysis, the question of why bad things happen to good people translates itself into some very different questions, no longer asking why something happened, but asking how we will respond, what we intend to do now that it has happened.

Are you capable of forgiving and accepting in love a world which has disappointed you by not being perfect, a world in which there is so much unfairness and cruelty, disease and crime, earthquake and accident? Can you forgive its imperfections and love it because it is capable of containing great beauty and goodness, and because it is the only world we have?

Are you capable of forgiving and loving the people around you, even if they have hurt you and let you down by not being perfect? Can you forgive them and love them, because there aren't any perfect people around, and because the penalty for not being able to love imperfect people is condemning oneself to loneliness?

Are you capable of forgiving and loving God even when you have found out that He is not perfect, even when He has let you down and disappointed you by permitting bad luck and sickness and cruelty in His world, and permitting some of those things to happen to you? Can you learn to love and forgive Him despite His limitations, as Job does, and as you once learned to forgive and love your parents even though they were not as wise, as strong, or as perfect as you needed them to be?

And if you can do these things, will you be able to recognize that the ability to forgive and the ability to love are the weapons God has given us to enable us to live fully, bravely, and meaningfully in this less-than-perfect world?

I think of Aaron and all that his life taught me, and I realize how much I have lost and how much I have gained. Yesterday seems less painful, and I am not afraid of tomorrow.[65]

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[65] Ibid pp. 115-116.

It is more important to have a good response to suffering than to find out its cause.

The meaning of suffering is what we do about it, the way we respond.

Suffering as part of the battle for transcendence

To live transcendence may be painful: creating something beautiful, good, true may require extraordinary sacrifices.

Several saints suffered as part of their mission: Saint Francis convalescence and imprisonment, which led him into his transformation; Saint Ignatius transformation while he was in convalescence after being injured in battle; Saint John of the Cross suffered imprisonment and violence from his peers; Thomas Merton how suffered because of his family.

Mahatma Gandhi, Maximilian Kolbe, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, and many others accepted suffering for good causes. In some cases, the price was their own lives, martyrdom, persecution.

Suffering as a battle for transcendence is reflected in a woman that accepts the pain of bearing a child; a man that accepts the sacrifice of work to care for his family or to do something valuable for the community; an athlete that accepts the sacrifice of training to excel in a sport; a student that accepts the effort of studying to learn and grow; a friend that sacrifices himself or herself to help a friend; a physician, a firefighter, a construction worker, and the examples can continue.

Often, suffering triggers transformation journeys that may enrich a personal reality: a person may need to develop strategies and resources to overcome suffering, which requires creating knowledge, relationships, values, greatness, transcendence, discernment.

Thomas Hart[66] shows how people grow through conflict and mature through the difficulties of life.

Patrick McDonald[67] explains the value of dealing with difficulties in life, as difficulties lead to personal authenticity, listening to others, taking risks, accepting personal limitations, and learning to live with paradox.

Loughlen Sorfield and Carroll Juliano[68] show that hard times require a spirituality that helps everyone deal with pain and failure; different feelings require different spiritualities.

Ronald Rolheiser[69] explains the spirituality of undergoing multiple deaths: the death of everyone's youth, of wholeness, of dreams, of honeymoons, of specific ideas, the grieving, and the blessings associated with such deaths and possible rebirths.

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66 Hart, Thomas. *Spiritual growth through conflict*. Copy presented in the supporting material folder of the "Spiritual Direction Program" at Sacred Heart University.

67 McDonald, Patrick. *Bedrock elements of spiritual growth*. Copy presented in the supporting material folder of the "Spiritual Direction Program" at Sacred Heart University.

68 Sorfield, Loughlen and Carroll Juliano. *A spirituality that integrates the total person*. Copy presented in the supporting material folder of the "Spiritual Direction Program" at Sacred Heart University.

69 Rolheiser, Ronald. *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*. Crown publishing. 2014. New York.

VIII.

SPIRITUALITY TRANSFORMS US

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the eighth dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: the power to transform persons and communities, the power to inspire, energize, and strengthen our lives. The transformation that spirituality generates is an extraordinary source of happiness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter is crucial for our lives, political economy and decision making: becoming aware of our power to transform provides us confidence, faith, hope, energy which enlighten, inspire and energize our lives, promoting transcendence, leading us to transformational journeys from and toward the love of God, participating in his communitarian mission, promoting values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, promoting social engagement, relying on our power to transform to build teams, task forces, and people willing to transform communities with communities that need such transformation power, building our ethics, virtues and community-oriented behaviors, promoting cooperation, compassion, solidarity, and social action.

World peace results from our transformational journeys, making us passionate to create, recreate, perfect, reform, purify, enlighten, uniting us internally and with others, building values, motivation, and love, transforming our ethics, promoting social inclusion, cooperation, compassion, solidarity, and social action.

Summary of the chapter

Any person can experience how our spirituality is transformational. It is a silent force, energy, and inspiration that drives a transformation process. Our spirituality provides the power to transform all aspects of our lives: our consciousness leads us to life journeys, to discover something that we consider sacred, that drives our passions and priorities. That discovery leads us to create, develop, and elevate. Our spirituality builds our values, relationships, and loves; we become more committed, more concerned for others, more engaged, which changes our behaviors.

Spirituality drives transformation processes that promote deeper awareness, silence, simplicity, inner rest, harmony, peace, happiness, freedom, developing meanings, values, virtues:

- Religions promote transformations in our ethics, values to build community, compassion, and generosity; in our concerns for others, sympathy, respect, love; tolerance of suffering from executing our values despite the suffering they may generate; transcendence to lead a life journey toward beauty, goodness, truth, and love.
- For Eastern religions: consciousness battles ignorance, meditation, and non-attachment as roadways to a happy life; connections lead to harmony, integration, cooperation, and peace, leading to purification, knowledge, and love.
- The Bible spirituality leads us to a transformational journey from and toward the love of God, participating in his communitarian mission, summarized in Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18-19: "Good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, comfort all who mourn."

- For Christianity: The Holy Spirit creates, recreates, gives life, heals, cleans, transforms, fills our hearts, makes us free, empowers, energizes, strengthens.
- For Saint Anthony: the desert to fight demons, to gain deeper consciousness, freedom, spiritual paternity.
- For John Cassian: ceaseless prayer to gain God's presence, purity of heart, virtues, love, a foretaste of heaven.
- For the Fathers of the Desert: continuous prayer to change depression, limitations, brokenness, vulnerabilities, failures, disconnect with inner selves, disconnect with others, the lack of meaning in lives, lack of values, lack of virtues, into peace and happiness.
- For Dionysius, the Areopagite: purification – illumination – union, a spirituality of rest, contemplation, silence, simplicity.
- For Saint Augustine: through contemplation, knowledge, virtues, interior repose, to enter into the divine light, entirely immersed in God.
- For Saint Gregory: continuing prayer and conversion.
- For Saint Bernard: continuous movement toward perfection based on love, restoring the image of God in us.
- For William of Saint Thierry: cognition and affection for God drive our transformation, restoring our likeness to God toward the Trinity.
- For Saint Francis: seeking and embracing poverty as a profound spiritual journey.
- For Saint John of the Cross: through "participation" the person is born anew, in his self, his affective life, his consciousness, and his spiritual receptivity; the person rediscovers the reality as flowing from the love of God, learns to see the reality from the eyes of God, purification of the senses and the spirit, spiritual illumination, and union with God through love.

- For Karol Wojtyla: common sense morality.
- For Joseph Ratzinger: the relationship with God in human history, healing and transforming the person and society.

Spirituality transforms us: creation, recreation, reformation, illumination, love, union

For Kees Waaijman, spirituality is a journey, a process, experimentation, that provides meaning to human lives, reaching the things themselves with one's consciousness:

> The Unconditional creates a relation marked by 'concernedness', involvement. One who is involved with someone or something is concerned, committed, and engaged.[1]

Waaijman describes the transformation process:

1. God not only created the world, the human beings, but it is also always recreating them, giving them a new life, modeling them, helping them.
2. However, people make wrong decisions. God reforms people. He reshapes them, returns them to what He created, restores them, leads them into conversion, reformation, and rebuilds the relationship with everyone; it is the road of purification.
3. The transformation leads everyone to become more like Him. He transforms the entire person, understanding, will, emotions, making them similar to Him; it is the illumination road (the practice of virtue, contemplation, and mystic phenomena).

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[1] Waaijman, Kees. "Toward a phenomenological definition of spirituality." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. pp. 44-46.

4. Humanity gets full of love; everyone's soul moves toward God and abandons everything to get closer to Him. God moves toward all souls and develops a profound loving intimacy; it is the union's road.
5. The mystic union with God after this life.[2]

Waaijman describes a transformation process that impacts all aspects of life:

> Spirituality leads to attachment to God and his creatures, impregnating all aspects of life: the relationship with God, social life, personal lifestyle, involving all aspects of human behavior: affections, the configuration of personal life, the praxis of an authentic life, and a religiosity full of faith.[3]

Waaijman[4] explains that spirituality as transformation is the result of the dynamics that spirituality generates. Spirituality involves personal and community lives, interacting with each other, and communicating with each other, subject to the transformation that the spirit generates. Spirituality involves love, which leads to transformation.

Spirituality transforms us: discovery, development, journey, elevation

Waaijman[5] emphasizes how spirituality is transformational. He explains how spirituality is part of people's lives, like a silent force,

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[2] Waaijman, Kees. Espiritualidad. *Formas, fundamentos y métodos*. Ediciones Sígueme. 2011. Salamanca. Spain. pp. 456-480.

[3] Ibid. p. 455.

[4] Waaijman, Kees, "Spirituality as transformation demands a structural dynamic approach." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2016. The Netherlands.

[5] Waaijman, Kees. "Spirituality as theology." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2011. Leuven. Belgium. p. 35.

an inspiration, an orientation. A person has a relationship with a transcendent being, a superior being, a deity. Such a relationship drives a transformation process (discovery, development, journey, elevation): "spirituality is the ongoing transformation which occurs in involved relationality with the Unconditional."[6]

> Spirituality is the process in which a person discovers that he is not an autonomous form which can define and maintain himself from within, but a form which in a never-ending process 'puts on' God's form as the birthing of his most authentic being.
>
> This process of transformation can assume several shapes (initiation into one's own being, life in relationship, process of symbolization, interiorization of values, identification with a person, etc.), and touch on different strata of the self (action, personal being, consciousness, being with and existing in dependence on the other, etc.).
>
> The adjective 'ongoing' makes explicit the time dimension of the transformation, or, to put it technically, the longitudinal dimension. This aspect is often conveyed in the image of the road or 'way': 'the way of the spiritual life,' the 'spiritual journey, the 'journey inward,' 'Tao,' 'spiritual pilgrimage,'.
>
> This image of the way implies a temporal dimension: a road is travelled, not traversed in a single leap. One has to take steps, cover distances. The journey may indeed begin with an intense experience (say, a conversion experience) but does not coincide with it. Spirituality is not a momentary, incidental, flash-in-the-pan event.
>
> The Unconditional creates a relation marked by 'concernedness', involvement. One who is involved with someone or something has to do with that someone or something, is concerned,

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[6] Waaijman, Kees. "Toward a phenomenological definition of spirituality." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 41.

committed, and engaged. Involvement is more than relation: it is to be set in motion as one who is engaged.[7]

According to Waaijman, this "way" has five dimensions:

The course of life itself of a human being, as a direct expression of the divine-human relationship.

The way of conversion, that abandons aversion from God and turns to God.

The way of the Torah that acts as a mediator between the divine and the human role in the divine-human relational process.

The way of integrity or wholeness, in which the original, God-given integrity comes to fruition.

The way of salvation: from beyond all human ways, God comes toward us, in absolute mercy, from the End.[8]

A relationship with a superior being creates, inspires, transforms, heals persons and communities; happiness is based on the love given and received, on the peace of being in the hands of an infinite God.

Spirituality transforms us: discovery, conservation, transformation

Kenneth I. Pargament[9] explains that spirituality fosters a process of transformation that involves the following steps:

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[7] Waaijman, Kees. "Toward a phenomenological definition of spirituality." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. pp. 44-46.

[8] Waaijman, Kees. "The way, root metaphor for spirituality. A Biblical Exploration." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. p. 79.

[9] Pargament, Kenneth I. "Spirituality as an Irreducible Human Motivation and Process." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. 2013.

- Discovery. As children or adults, people discover something sacred, and it becomes a central organizing force for their lives, their passions, and priorities; Emmons found that spiritual strivings correlated more strongly with measures of well-being than did other strivings. Unlike other strivings, spiritual strivings were also linked to less conflict and greater coherence within the individual's system of goals.[10]
- Conservation. People can take a variety of pathways in their efforts to sustain a relationship with the sacred. […] Social scientists have demonstrated robust links between these spiritual pathways and indices of health and well-being.[11]
- Transformation. Conservation is not always possible or desirable; change is often needed; struggles may lead to health and well-being; however, long-lasting spiritual struggles may have adverse outcomes if they cannot be resolved positively.[12]

Wayne Teasdale[13] shows how spirituality transforms entire lives, finds a person's true self, builds a morality based on love and compassion, freeing from someone's false self, can love others and integrate to the humanity and the creation, developing wisdom and sensitivity.

Spirituality transforms us: religions lead to transformation

Alan Jones[14] shows the benefits of religious meditation or contemplation, as the Daoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, and

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[10] Ibid. p. 274.
[11] Ibid. p. 274.
[12] Ibid. p. 277.
[13] Teasdale, Wayne. *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions*. New World Library. 1999. California.
[14] Jones, Alan. *Exploring Spiritual Direction*. Cowley Publisher. 1999.

Muslim traditions teach: the ability to feel admiration and love for the creation, ability to love the other without trying to control and possess, to have happiness and peace, ability to be in touch with our limitations humbly and honestly, non-attachment, learning the wisdom that difficulties provide, as the Epic of Gilgamesh teaches: to go through death, suffering, illness and gain wisdom from it.

Eugene F. Gorski[15] summarizes the benefits of the relationship with a superior being: he presents the "Axial Period," referring to the emergence of some philosophical and spiritual geniuses around 500 BC: Buddha, Confucius, Jeremiah, the Upanishad mystics, Mencius, Laozi.

For Gorski, post-axial religions, which have continued until today, produce some common benefits:

- Ethical component. They all defend values required to build the community, especially compassion and turning away from selfishness to eliminate violence, greed, fear, despair, hatred, rage.
- Universal concern. They promote mechanisms to transform the more profound, less conscious levels of the self, relying on spirituality, to reduce selfishness and to promote sympathy, respect, generosity, love for others, a universal concern for humankind, the "Golden rule": Do unto others what you would want them to do unto you.
- Tolerance of suffering. Both ethical components and universal concern must be practiced despite personal suffering, or even more, suffering is part of life, which helps develop personal compassion.

[15] Gorski CSC, Eugene F. *Theology of religions. A sourcebook for interreligious study*. Paulist Press. 2008. New York.

- Self-transcendence and salvation. The existence of a transcendent reality, the sacred, a god, nirvana, heaven, is an invitation, a road to spirituality, beyond the realm of personal egotism.

Spirituality transforms us: for Hindu spirituality, consciousness battles ignorance, we become what we know

Felicity Edwards[16] explains Sri Aurobindo's views, "a specialist in the dynamics of spiritual transformation on both the theoretical and the practical levels." For Sri Aurobindo, spiritual transformation results from experiencing more profound consciousness levels, which help people connect with reality.

As Edwards describes, such deeper consciousness helps people battle ignorance: ignorance of not admitting that an Absolute is the source of all being and becoming, ignorance that the Self produces changes, ignorance that people are part of a whole cosmos, ignorance of how time and eternity are related, ignorance of someone's psyche.

Edwards explains how this ignorance blocks people from becoming their true selves: "we become what we know;" a personal transformation starts by having the right epistemology, by developing personal awareness, consciousness.

Brian C. Taylor[17] explains how apophatic prayer helps us eliminate the false self of all wrong views that we created, unlearning patterns of the false self, a contemplative healing process, discovering our true self, and our true identity.

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[16] Edwards, Felicity. "Becoming what we know. Dynamics of Integral Transformation in the Spirituality of Sri Aurobindo." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. The Netherlands. p. 253.

[17] Taylor, Brian C. Changing Your Mind: Contemplative Prayer and Personal Transformation. Sewanee Theological Review 48:2 (Eger 2005).

Spirituality transforms us: for Buddhist spirituality, meditation, and non-attachment as roadways to a happy life

Transformation plays a crucial role in Buddhism. Suffering is the initiator of transformation; monasticism, belonging to a community, leads to personal and social transformation.

Buddhism deepens the understanding of the benefits of meditation as the road to happiness.

Prince Siddhartha Gautama (He who achieves his aim) was born in the 6th century B.C. in Nepal, beneath the majestic mountains of the Himalayas. His father was the king who ruled the tribe; his mother died a week after Siddharta's birth; both were recognized and loved by the people as right persons and rulers. Siddhartha grew up secluded in the palace, away from suffering and religion. He married at the age of 16 and had a son. At the age of 29, he left the palace, and for the first time, he confronted an ancient man, a sick man, a dead man, and a sage. Siddhartha was deeply moved by them and left the palace and his family. For the next six years, he decided to live an ascetic life to get rid of suffering, joining different spiritual men and a group of five ascetics. He practiced such extreme asceticism, almost to death, by starvation and thirst

However, he realized that asceticism did not eliminate suffering, so he looked for a balance, a middle way. For some time, he continued meditating, looking for a response to suffering, until he reached his "enlightenment," becoming the Buddha (He who is awake).

He dedicated the rest of his life to teaching the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. He created communities of monks and traveled for 80 years, teaching others.

Buddhist's Eightfold Path shows the centrality of meditation and non-attachment as a roadway to a happy life. According to Buddhism, meditation leads to 1. A right view, a balanced view of life, 2. A right intention, 3. A right speech, 4. A right morality to build a reasonable lifestyle for the entire community, 5. A right livelihood

with mindfulness and compassion, 6. A right effort not led by passions, 7. A right mindfulness with a view of life that integrates the entire world and community, 8. An integrated life full of wisdom.

Buddha is undoubtedly one of the most influential figures in world history. His teachings have affected everything from various other faiths to literature and philosophy in India and the rest of the world.

For Buddhism, meditation leads to mindfulness, richer perceptions, discovering the individual's true self, discovering others, connecting with each person, and connecting with the universe.

Eugene F. Gorski[18] explains how Buddhism emerged out of people's depression of the impossibility to liberate from samsara and karma of Hinduism: the existence of pain and suffering seemed to confirm that everyone is doomed to continue with endless cycles of deaths and rebirths. Together with that, people were dissatisfied with the religious duties, full-time demands, incompatible with daily life's responsibilities. The reality shows that nothing changes; India's life became more violent, more competitive, and had adverse social, economic, and political outcomes.

This journey enlightened him and transformed him into a spiritual and leader. The role of non-attachment, mindfulness, wisdom for each aspect of life were central parts of his journey, which led him to discover the centrality of meditation for personal and social peace.

Spirituality transforms us: for Daoist spirituality, connections lead to harmony, integration, cooperation, and peace

Daoist meditation pays special attention to the universal elements, air, water, earth, fire, which leads to peaceful meditation in connection with the universe.

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[18] Gorski CSC, Eugene F. *Theology of religions. A sourcebook for interreligious study.* Paulist Press. 2008. New York.

According to Daoism, while meditating, a person pays attention to one's breathing, to the air that has been around for millenniums, filling one's lungs with that eternal air, feeling own heartbeats, how that air enters into the body, filling the body with the universe, with the eternity, feeling one's energy, emotions, sentiments, connecting to the earth, to the universe, to humanity, feeling deep peace, beauty, being part of the perfection of the universe.

Eugene F. Gorski[19] presents how Confucianism and Daoism were born in China during the Axial Age due to chaos, violence, disorder, and crisis.

Confucius provided a moralist response based on the gentleman's human ideals, hard work, compassion, and humanism.

He believed that egotism was the source of all evils, so he proposed a Golden Rule, reciprocity, empathy, love of others, love and care of parents, children, friends, neighbors, the village, all humanity. That requires wisdom, knowledge to judge what is right or wrong, and it also requires virtue: the "Way of Dao."

The Daoists shared many of Confucius' ideas; however, they proposed different solutions deeply rooted in spirituality. Laozi composed the "Daodejing, Classic of the Way and the Virtue," the way of nature, the way of the cosmos.

The Dao has two aspects: the yin reflecting the dark, hidden, passive, receptive, yielding, fresh, soft, and feminine, and the yang reflecting the light open, active, aggressive, controlling, hot, hard and masculine. Although yin and yang are opposite, they need each other to find balance and harmony. Daoism defended the yin and believed that Confucianism exalted the yang.

Confucianism was a manifestation of China's problems, alienating people from the Dao of nature, the spontaneity of human life.

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[19] Ibid.

Daoist spirituality was an invitation to participate in a higher reality, reducing the ego and placing the person as part of the community, of the universe. Daoists accepted the reality of good and bad things, which can be better perceived by meditation practice.

Zhuangzi, a master of Daoism's spiritual life, believed in the natural change and transformation of life, with good and bad times, life and death, joy and sorrow, one needs to be at peace with the natural way. He defended meditation quite similarly to Buddhism, which helps see the world afresh, enjoying the present reality.

Sung-Hae Kim[20] explains how Daoism is an attractive spirituality for contemporary people because it flows from the personal to the suprapersonal, focusing on the "apophatic way, using shapeless images such as empty space, void life-energy of the valley, the uncarved block of the tree and the chaos, as well as the kataphatic way of concrete images such as mother, water flowing in the streams, low ocean and natural workings of the four seasons."[21]

Sung-Hae Kim studied Dao's morning and evening celebrations and presented insightful conclusions:

> The morning service focuses on the inner cultivation of the Daoist Masters themselves, while the evening service concentrates on their acts of mercy for the sick, lonely, and suffering people and natural world as a whole.[22]

Sung-Hae Kim concludes with the way the Dao integrates Buddhist and Confucian spiritual dimensions:

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[20] Sung-Hae Kim. "Studies on Daoist morning and evening services of the Quanzhen Order." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium.

[21] Sung-Hae Kim. "Studies on Daoist morning and evening services of the Quanzhen Order." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 55.

[22] Ibid. p. 69.

> Wang Chongyang, the founder of the Quanzhen Order, stated clearly that his teaching incorporated the good points of the Three Religions. He encouraged his followers to read not only the Daodejing and the Qingjingjing but the Buddhist Prajna-paramita Sutra and the Confucian Book of Filial Piety as well. Therefore, it is natural to find various elements of the Three Religions in this official prayer book of the Quanzhen Order.[23]

Spirituality transforms us: for Islamic spirituality, the five pillars lead to purification, knowledge, and love

Islamic spirituality has five pillars: 1. The testimony that there is only one God, and Muhammad is his messenger; 2. The need to pray five times per day; 3. To give 2.5% of personal wealth to people in need; 4. The need to fast during the month of Ramadan; 5. The pilgrimage to Mecca.

Islamic spirituality is often called Sufism, a mystical attitude of Islam, based on a personal experience with God, looking for more profound knowledge and love in his presence. Sufis work to purify their hearts from worldly attachments.

It requires abandoning personal will, in complete trust in God, deepening a personal intimacy with God, getting rid of egoism.

The Qur'an presents the key elements of Islamic spirituality: the repetition of the Divine names,[24] praising God using some formulas,

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[23] Ibid. p. 61.

[24]https://www.thoughtco.com/names-of-allah-2004295 Allah, The Compassionate, The Beneficent, The Merciful, The King, The Sovereign Lord, The Holy, The Source of Peace, The Guardian of Faith, The Protector, The Mighty, The Strong, The Compeller, The Majestic, The Creator, the Evolver, The Maker, The Fashioner, The Great Forgiver, The Subduer, The Dominant, The Bestower, The Sustainer, The Provider, The Opener, The Reliever, The All-Knowing, The Retainer, The Expander, The Abaser,

worshiping God with sincerity, and more frequently than the five times, during day and night.

Islam invites to contemplate the creation:

> In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the oceans for the benefit of mankind; in the water that God sends down from the sky, and revives the earth with it after it had died, and scatters in it all kinds of creatures; in the changing of the winds, and the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth; are signs for people who understand.
>
> Those who remember God while standing, and sitting, and on their sides, and they reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, You did not create this in vain. Glory to You!"
>
> And whatsoever He created for you on earth is of diverse colors. Surely in that is a sign for people who are mindful.
>
> Is he who worships devoutly during the watches of the night, prostrating himself and standing up, mindful of the Hereafter,

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The Exalter, The Honorer, The Humiliator, The All-Hearing, The All-Seeing, The Judge, The Just, The Subtle One, The Aware, The Forebearing, The Great One, The All-Forgiving, The Grateful, The Most High, The Great, The Preserver, The Maintainer, The Reckoner, The Sublime One, The Generous, The Watcher, The Responsive, The Vast, The Wise, The Loving, The Glorious, The Resurrector, The Witness, The Truth, The Trustee, The Strong, The Firm One, The Supporter, The Praiseworthy, The Counter, The Originator, The Reproducer, The Restorer, The Destroyer, The Alive, The Self-Subsisting, The Perceiver, The Unique, The One, The Eternal, The Able, The Powerful, The Expediter, The Delayer, The First, The Last, The Manifest, The Hidden, The Governor, The Most Exalted, The Source of All Goodness, The Acceptor of Repentance, The Avenger, The Pardoner, The Compassionate, The King of Kings, The Lord of Majesty and Bounty, The Equitable, The Gatherer, The Self-Sufficient, The Enricher, The Preventer, The Distresser, The Propitious, The Light, The Guide, The Incomparable, The Everlasting, The Inheritor, The Guide to the Right Path, The Patient.

> and placing his hope in the mercy of his Lord? Say, "Are those who know and those who do not know equal?" Only those possessed of reason will remember.
>
> In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the oceans for the benefit of mankind; in the water that God sends down from the sky, and revives the earth with it after it had died, and scatters in it all kinds of creatures; in the changing of the winds, and the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth; are signs for people who understand.[25]

Mindfulness, contemplation, loving God's creation are ways to live Islamic spirituality.

Spirituality transforms us. The Bible: "good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, comfort all who mourn"

Both the Old and the New Testaments emphasize how the spirit of the Lord leads to transformation:

> Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18-19. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, To preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward.

The New Testament provides testimonies of how spirituality leads to transformation: Jesus performed multiple physical healings, resurrected dead people.

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[25] *Qur'an.* Translated by Talal Itani. https://www.clearquran.com/downloads/quran-in-modern-english.pdf.

The New Testament presents the centrality of the purity of the heart. In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus presents the Beatitudes, expressing how spirituality, love, compassion, humility, meekness, cleanness of heart, peacemaking, persecuted for the sake of righteousness, lead to happiness:

> Matthew 5:3-12. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. Blesses are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.

The Beatitudes reflect a shift from the Ten Commandments' normative approach to an approach based on the heart. In fact, in the Old Testament, there is a turning point with Jeremiah:

> Jeremiah 31:31,33. Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

> Ezekiel 36:26. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Bernard McGinn[26] discusses as an outstanding dimension of spirituality is how the encounter with God transforms our minds and lives and how He encourages us to transform others by our teaching, opening new processes of transformation.

Louis Bouyer[27] shows how Matthew emphasizes the transformation as the result of spirituality. For Bouyer, in the Sermon of the Mount, the Ten Commandments have a new orientation: the law of the spirit supplants the law written on tables of stone; love transforms our behaviors, a personal and intimate relationship with God, the spring of our interior life: a spiritual realism that leads us in our new mission, to become apostles.

Bouyer[28] shows how Mark emphasizes our battle with the demons, who cause falsehood, sin, suffering, and death. Jesus battled the demons in the desert and succeeded, He battled with the Scribes and Pharisees to focus on the heart, He appointed the twelve and sent them to preach conversion, change of heart, and to cast out demons.

Bouyer[29] shows how Luke emphasizes spiritual purification. Luke stresses the value of poverty in his version of the Beatitudes. Luke emphasizes the value of continual prayer, urgent prayer, unwearied prayer based on the conviction that God's heart is mercy in his parable of the friend who asks a favor in the middle of the night, and the parable of the unjust judge who gives in to the insistent

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[26] McGinn, Bernard. *The essential writings of Christian mysticism.* The Modern Library. The Random House. New York. 2006. p. xv.

[27] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. A history of Christian spirituality.* Volume I. The Seabury Press. 1963. New York.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

widow. He especially shows Jesus in prayer in different crucial moments of the Gospel. Luke expanded on the role of the Holy Spirit, during Jesus infancy, in the annunciation, the visitation to Saint Elizabeth, with Zachary, during Jesus baptism, and at the temple "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," in the promise that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who pray.

Bouyer presents our transformation according to John:

> John 6:37-40. All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will not cast out. Because I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. Now this is the will of the Father who sent me: that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up again in the last day. And this is the will of my Father that sent me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day.
>
> John 14:15-18. If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him: but you shall know him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.

For Bouyer, Origen expresses how the spiritual journey requires purification, struggle against demons, and imitating Jesus in his journey toward ascension.

According to Bouyer, the Epistle of Saint James stresses that spirituality and morality enhance each other, which is reflected in his famous statements:

James 2:14-18. What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? And if a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food: And one of you say to them: Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit? So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself. But some man will say: Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without works; and I will shew thee, by works, my faith.

James 3:13, 17-18. Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew, by a good conversation, his work in the meekness of wisdom. But the wisdom, that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation. And the fruit of justice is sown in peace, to them that make peace.

Spirituality transforms us: The Holy Spirit creates, recreates

According to M. M. Philipon, the word "ruah" expresses a breath; "the 'breath of Yahweh' expresses an invisible and terrible force, whose action penetrates the universe."[30]

Genesis 1:1-2. In the beginning God created heaven, and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters.

Psalm 33:6. By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth.

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[30] Philipon, M. M. *Los dones del Espiritu Santo*. Editorial Pelicano. 2009. Spain.

The breath reflects God's creating and vivifying power, energizer, the principle of life:

> Psalm 104:29-30. But if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled: thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

How will that renewal be?

> Jeremiah 31:33. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

> Ezekiel 11:19-20. And I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit in their bowels: and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: That they may walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments, and do them: and that they may be my people, and I may be their God.

Richard Lennan[31] reinforces the notion of the Spirit as "breath," as a creating and healing force:

> Ezekiel 37:1-14. The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord: and set me down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones. And he led me about through them on every side: now they were very many upon the face of the plain, and they were exceeding dry. And he said to me: Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live? And I answered: O Lord God, thou knowest And he said to me: Prophesy concerning these bones; and say to

[31] Lennan, Richard; Pineda Madrid, Nancy. *The holy Spirit. Setting the world on fire*. Paulist Press. 2017. New York.

them: Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin: and I will give you spirit and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord. And I prophesied as he had commanded me: and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a commotion: and the bones came together, each one to its joint. And I saw, and behold the sinews, and the flesh came up upon them: and the skin was stretched out over them, but there was no spirit in them. And he said to me: Prophesy to the spirit, prophesy, O son of man, and say to the spirit: Thus saith the Lord God: Come, spirit, from the four winds, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again. And I prophesied as he had commanded me: and the spirit came into them, and they lived: and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. And he said to me: Son of man: All these bones are the house of Israel : they say: Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost, and we are cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say to them: Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchres, O my people: and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchres, and shall have brought you out of your graves, O my people: And shall have put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall make you rest upon your own land: and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and done it, saith the Lord God.

Psalm 139:7-10. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I

> take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: Even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me.

Maurizio De Sanctis[32] also presents the notion of the Spirit as "breath":

> Genesis 2:7. And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
>
> 1 Kings 19:11-12. And he said to him: Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord: and behold the Lord passeth, and a great and strong wind before the Lord over throwing the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces: the Lord is not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake: the Lord is not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire: the Lord is not in the fire, and after the fire a whistling of a gentle air.
>
> John 20:22. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

Spirituality transforms us: The Holy Spirit gives life

Anthony C. Thiselton[33] explains how the Holy Spirit is the source of life, creation, and creativity. During the creation:

> Genesis 1:2. The spirit of God moved over the waters.

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[32] De Sanctis, Maurizio. *Lo Spirito Santo. Questo grande sconosciuto*. Paoline Editoriale. 2008. Italy.

[33] Thiselton, Anthony C. A *Shorter Guide to the holy Spirit. Bible, doctrine, experience*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2016. Michigan.

> Genesis 2:7. And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
>
> Psalm 104:29-30. But if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled: thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.
>
> Ezekiel 37:5. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Listen! I will make breath enter you so you may come to life.

Philipon also explains how the Spirit gives life:

> John 6:63. It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life.
>
> Ezekiel 37:5-6. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin: and I will give you spirit and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

Maurizio De Sanctis[34] presents the symbol of the water to express how the Spirit gives life:

> Ezekiel 37:1-14. The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord: and set me down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones. And he led me about through them on every side: now they were very many upon the face of the plain, and they were exceeding dry. And he said to me: Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live? And I

[34] De Sanctis, Maurizio. *Lo Spirito Santo. Questo grande sconosciuto*. Paoline Editoriale. 2008. Italy.

answered: O Lord God, thou knowest And he said to me: Prophesy concerning these bones; and say to them: Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin: and I will give you spirit and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord. And I prophesied as he had commanded me: and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a commotion: and the bones came together, each one to its joint. And I saw, and behold the sinews, and the flesh came up upon them: and the skin was stretched out over them, but there was no spirit in them. And he said to me: Prophesy to the spirit, prophesy, O son of man, and say to the spirit: Thus saith the Lord God: Come, spirit, from the four winds, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again. And I prophesied as he had commanded me: and the spirit came into them, and they lived: and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. And he said to me: Son of man: All these bones are the house of Israel : they say: Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost, and we are cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say to them: Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchres, O my people: and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchres, and shall have brought you out of your graves, O my people: And shall have put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall make you rest upon your own land: and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and done it, saith the Lord God.

Isaiah 44:3-4. For I will pour out waters upon the thirsty ground, and streams upon the dry land: I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy stock. And they shall spring up among the herbs, as willows beside the running waters.

Psalm 63:1-2. O God, my God, to thee do I watch at break of day. For thee my soul hath thirsted; for thee my flesh, O how many ways! In a desert land, and where there is no way, and no water: so in the sanctuary have I come before thee, to see thy power and thy glory.

John 1:32-33. And John gave testimony, saying: I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from heaven, and he remained upon him. And I knew him not; but he who sent me to baptize with water, said to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him, he it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John 3:3-5. Jesus answered, and said to him: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith to him: How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again? Jesus answered: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Luke 7:44-50. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she with tears hath washed my feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And he said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace.

> John 4:13-14. Jesus answered, and said to her: Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever: But the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting.
>
> John 19:33-34. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water.
>
> Matthew 1:18. Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost.
>
> John 6:63. It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life.

Spirituality transforms us: The Holy Spirit heals, cleans, transforms

Maurizio De Sanctis[35] presents the symbol of the fire to express the transforming energy of the Spirit; for him, fire is the symbol of burning love.

> Exodus 3:1-5. Now Moses fed the sheep of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Madian: and he drove the flock to the inner parts of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. And the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he saw that the bush was on fire and was not

[35] De Sanctis, Maurizio. *Lo Spirito Santo. Questo grande sconosciuto*. Paoline Editoriale. 2008. Italy.

burnt. And Moses said: I will go and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Acts 2:3-4. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.

Jeremiah 20:7-9. Thou hast deceived me, O Lord, and I am deceived: thou hast been stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I am become a laughing-stock all the day, all scoff at me. For I am speaking now this long time, crying out against iniquity, and I often proclaim devastation: and the word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day. Then I said: I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: and there came in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was wearied, not being able to bear it.

The baptism with water is the symbol of cleansing:

Matthew 3:11. I indeed baptize you in the water unto penance, but he that shall come after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire.

Luke 3:16. John answered, saying unto all: I indeed baptize you with water; but there shall come one mightier that I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

John 3:3-8. Jesus answered, and said to him: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith to him: How can a man be born when

he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again? Jesus answered: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Wonder not, that I said to thee, you must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh, and whither he goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Acts 1:5. For John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.

Romans 5:3-5. And not only so; but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience trial; and trial hope; And hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.

1 Corinthians 6:11. And such some of you were; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God.

2 Corinthians 3:18. But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Titus 3:4-7. But when the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared: Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost; Whom he hath

poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior: That, being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting.

Spirituality transforms us: The Holy Spirit fills our hearts, makes us free

The Holy Spirit fills our hearts, feeds us, makes us free:

John 7:37-38. And on the last, and great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Romans 8:14-16. For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God.

The Holy Spirit inhabits in the soul of the person, is sent by God to our souls:

2 Corinthians 13:14. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Acts 15:8. And God, who knoweth the hearts, gave testimony, giving unto them the Holy Ghost, as well as to us.

Romans 8:9. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

> Romans 8:11. And if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
>
> 1 Corinthians 3:16. Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
>
> 1 Corinthians 6:19. Or know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own?
>
> 1 John 4:13. In this we know that we abide in him, and he in us: because he hath given us of his spirit.

The Spirit transforms our hearts:

> 2 Corinthians 1:22. Who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.
>
> 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. You are our epistle, written in our hearts, which is known and read by all men: Being manifested, that you are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, and written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart.
>
> Galatians 4:6-7. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Therefore now he is not a servant, but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God.

1 Thessalonians 1:6. And you became followers of us, and of the Lord; receiving the word in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

Hebrews 10:15-17. And the Holy Ghost also doth testify this to us. For after that he said: And this is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give my laws in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them: And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.

Hebrews 3:7-10. Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith: To day if you shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation; in the day of temptation in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me, proved and saw my works, Forty years: for which cause I was offended with this generation, and I said: They always err in heart. And they have not known my ways.

1 Peter 4:14. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his Spirit, resteth upon you.

1 John 3:24. And he that keepeth his commandments, abideth in him, and he in him. And in this we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Spirituality transforms us: The Holy Spirit empowers, energizes, strengthens

According to M. M. Philipon,[36] throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was present in most extraordinary times, as with Joseph in Egypt. Philipon highlights several passages that reinforce this intuition:

> Genesis 41:38-40. The counsel pleased Pharao and all his servants. And he said to them: Can we find such another man, that is full of the spirit of God? He said therefore to Joseph: Seeing God hath shewn thee all that thou hast said, can I find one wiser and one like unto thee? Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey: only in the kingly throne will I be above thee.

With Moses:

> Numbers 11:16-17. And the Lord said to Moses: Gather unto me seventy men of the ancients of Israel, whom thou knowest to be ancients and masters of the people: and thou shalt bring them to the door of the tabernacle of the covenant, and shalt make them stand there with thee, That I may come down and speak with thee: and I will take of thy spirit, and will give to them, that they may bear with thee the burden of the people, and thou mayest not be burthened alone.

[36] Philipon, M. M. *Los dones del Espiritu Santo*. Editorial Pelicano. 2009. Spain.

With David:

> 1 Samuel 16:13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.

With Isaiah:

> Isaiah 59:21. This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My spirit that is in thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

> Isaiah 63:11-14. And he remembered the days of old of Moses, and of his people: Where is he that brought them up out of the sea, with the shepherds of his flock? where is he that put in the midst of them the spirit of his Holy One? He that brought out Moses by the right hand, by the arm of his majesty: that divided the waters before them, to make himself an everlasting name. He that led them out through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness that stumbleth not. As a beast that goeth down in the field, the spirit of the Lord was their leader: so didst thou lead thy people to make thyself a glorious name.

With Ezekiel:

> Ezekiel 36:26-27. And I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in the midst of you: and I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and to keep my judgments, and do them.

With Haggai:

> Haggai 2:5. The word that I covenanted with you when you came out of the land of Egypt: and my spirit shall be in the midst of you: fear not.

With Zechariah:

> Zechariah 4:6. And he answered, and spoke to me, saying: This is the word of the Lord to Zorobabel, saying: Not with an army, nor by might, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

The New Testament also expresses the power of the Spirit:

> Luke 1:35-37. And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God.

And how the Spirit strengthens and empowers:

> Acts 1:8. But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.

> Acts 10:38. Jesus of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

> Romans 8:26-27. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what the Spirit desireth; because he asketh for the saints according to God.
>
> Romans 15:13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost.
>
> Ephesians 3:14-19. For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man, That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that being rooted and founded in charity, You may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth: To know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God.
>
> 2 Timothy 1:7. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love, and of sobriety.

The Spirit is an energizing force:

> Judges 14:6. And the spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and he tore the lion as he would have torn a kid in pieces, having nothing at all in his hand: and he would not tell this to his father and mother.

> 1 Samuel 16:13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.
>
> Psalm 51:1. Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.
>
> Ezekiel 37:14. And shall have put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall make you rest upon your own land: and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and done it, saith the Lord God.

Spirituality transforms us: for Saint Anthony, the desert to fight demons, to gain deeper consciousness, freedom, spiritual paternity

McGinn[37] describes how Saint Anthony (251 – 356) abandoned his life in Egypt and lived alone in the desert for 20 years, battling with the demons, reaching a perfect mastery over himself and the world. When his friends tore down the fort where he lived, they found him in perfect physical and emotional conditions. He became a spiritual leader of many, a visionary. "The desert is the place to encounter and fight the spirits of evil, of lust, gluttony, anger, desire for possessions, and the like."[38]

After twenty years, his friends broke down the door of his hut in the desert, and they described what they found:

> And so for nearly twenty years he continued training himself in solitude, never going forth, and but seldom seen by any. After

[37] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York.

[38] Ibid. p. 136.

> this, when many were eager and wishful to imitate his discipline, and his acquaintances came and began to cast down and wrench off the door by force, Antony, as from a shrine, came forth initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God. Then for the first time he was seen outside the fort by those who came to see him. And they, when they saw him, wondered at the sight, for he had the same habit of body as before, and was neither fat, like a man without exercise, nor lean from fasting and striving with the demons, but he was just the same as they had known him before his retirement. And again his soul was free from blemish, for it was neither contracted as if by grief, nor relaxed by pleasure, nor possessed by laughter or dejection, for he was not troubled when he beheld the crowd, nor overjoyed at being saluted by so many. But he was altogether even as being guided by reason, and abiding in a natural state.[39]

Spirituality transforms us: for John Cassian, ceaseless prayer to gain God's presence, purity of heart, virtues, love, a foretaste of heaven

McGinn explains how for John Cassian, purity of heart is nothing else but love:

> The flowering of the virtues acquires purity of heart, and the perfection of apostolic charity is possessed by means of purity of heart […] Matthew 5:8 had promised the vision of God to those who were pure of heart […] based on the purifying activity of his formula of unceasing prayer (Ps 69:2 O Lord come to my aid, Lord make haste to help me) […] Prayer is the essence of the life

[39] Athanasius. *Vita Antonii*. Ch 14.

of perfection and that pure and unceasing prayer provides an immediate access to God's presence as a foretaste of heaven.[40]

Louis Bouyer[41] explains Cassian's spiritual transformation. In his Conferences, John Cassian explained three renunciations: the first two renunciations of material goods and worldly delights, the third focuses on the spiritual contemplation:

> We must now speak of the renunciations, of which tradition and the authority of Holy Scripture show us three, and which every one of us ought with the utmost zeal to make complete.
>
> The first is that by which as far as the body is concerned we make light of all the wealth and goods of this world; the second, that by which we reject the fashions and vices and former affections of soul and flesh; the third, that by which we detach our soul from all present and visible things, and contemplate only things to come, and set our heart on what is invisible. And we read that the Lord charged Abraham to do all these three at once, when He said to him "Get thee out from thy country, and thy kinsfolk, and thy father's house."
>
> First He said "from thy country," i.e., from the goods of this world, and earthly riches: secondly, "from thy kinsfolk," i.e., from this former life and habits and sins, which cling to us from our very birth and are joined to us as it were by ties of affinity and kinship: thirdly, "from thy father's house," i.e., from all the recollection of this world, which the sight of the eyes can afford.
>
> To these three sorts of renunciations the three books of Solomon suitably correspond. For Proverbs answers to the first renunciation, as in it the desires for carnal things and earthly sins

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[40] McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. pp. 219-220.

[41] Ibid. pp. 500-511.

> are repressed; to the second Ecclesiastes corresponds, as there everything which is done under the sun is declared to be vanity; to the third the Song of Songs, in which the soul soaring above all things visible, is actually joined to the word of God by the contemplation of heavenly things.[42]

For Cassian, we need constant prayer, a prayer of the heart, inspired in the scriptures, the psalmody.

Spirituality transforms us: for Saint Gregory, continuing prayer and conversion

McGinn[43] explains how Saint Gregory believed that we need a continuing conversion, a constant struggle, a movement from exteriority to interiority, from the world's false values toward God, joy, and peace, transforming the sufferings of our lives into growth.

As McGinn[44] explains, continuous conversion requires compunction, a desire to change our hearts, contrasting the evils of present life versus the good of spiritual life, in which the Spirit of God takes possession of him, fills him with charity. His life of continuous prayer is not alienation from charity, on the contrary:

> Through him the Lord healed the bodily ailments of many present, and cleansed others from evil spirits. And He gave grace to Antony in speaking, so that he consoled many that were sorrowful, and set those at variance at one, exhorting all to prefer the love of Christ before all that is in the world. And while he exhorted and advised them to remember the good things to come, and the loving-kindness of God toward us, 'Who spared not His

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[42] John Cassian. *Conference III*. Chapter 6.

[43] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. p. 46.

[44] Ibid. p. 48.

> own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,' he persuaded many to embrace the solitary life. And thus it happened in the end that cells arose even in the mountains, and the desert was colonised by monks, who came forth from their own people, and enrolled themselves for the citizenship in the heavens.[45]

Spirituality transforms us: for Saint Bernard, continuous movement toward perfection based on love, restoring the image of God in us

McGinn[46] explains how Saint Bernard stresses how every person can experience a transformation toward God's image and likeness: we were created in the image of God, and we can work to restore that image, and a contemplative lifestyle is a way to do it, advancing step by step.

Louis Bouyer[47] explains how Bernard conceived a continuous movement toward perfection based on love. Humility is the foundation of the right knowledge, the source of love, as a person realizes that his limitations are shared with others, so they need to have pity and charity on others. Humility is the foundation of the love of God, who died for us, who cares for us and helps us in our brokenness. Such love for God leads us into a journey to restore our image of God within us. This leads us from one experience to another, growing in freedom, aligning us with God's love, empowering our journey toward God, toward deification.

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[45] Athanasius. *Vita Antonii*. Ch 14.

[46] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. pp. 182-184.

[47] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the Middle Ages. A history of Christian spirituality*. Volume II. The Seabury Press. 1982. New York. pp 195-196

Spirituality transforms us: for William of Saint Thierry, cognition and affection of God drive our transformation, restoring our likeness to God, toward the Trinity

McGinn explains how William of Saint Thierry expanded the transformation toward the image of the Trinity:

> The holy soul is reformed to the image of the Trinity, to the image of him who created her in the very manner of his beatitude. For a will that has been enlightened and drawn --that means intellect, love, and the disposition of enjoyment— is in a certain way three personal affections, as is said and believed of God the Trinity.[48] The soul gradually attains to perfecting participation through a life of virtue, knowing and loving him more closely.[49]
>
> Cognition of God and affection of God, drive our transformation, restoring our likeness to God.[50]

Spirituality transforms us: for Saint Francis, seeking and embracing poverty as a profound spiritual journey

As Louis Boyer[51] explains, Saint Francis' transformation was not the result of being in prison for one year in a war between Assisi and Perugia and the physical and medical impact. Instead, he had a dream, after which he "plighted his troth to a Lady, so noble, so rich, so fast and so wise: Lady Poverty," after which he "felt impelled by the Lord to go to the lepers, and mercifully care for them. When I

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[48] McGinn, Bernard. *The Growth of Mysticism. Gregory the Great through the twelfth century*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1994. New York. p. 230.

[49] Ibid. p. 232.

[50] Ibid. p. 236.

[51] Bouyer, Louis; Leclercq, Jean; Vandenbroucke, Francois; Cognet, Louis. *The spirituality of the Middle Ages. A history of Christian spirituality*. Volume II. The Seabury Press. 1982. New York.

left them, what seemed to me bitter was changed for me into sweetness both of spirit and body. A short time afterwards, I left the world."[52]

Who is this "Lady Poverty"?

> Holy Poverty shines resplendent in her authority and excels all others by her peculiar Grace. For she is the Foundation and Guardian of all the Virtues and holds the Primacy among the Evangelical Counsels. Wherefore let not the other virtues fear should the rain descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, threatening destruction, if only they have been founded upon the Rock of Poverty. And justly for the Son of God, the Lord of Hosts and King of Glory, loved this Virtue with a special love, sought this Virtue, found her, and by her wrought Salvation in the midst of the Earth.[53]

The values of Lady Poverty impacted Francis, leading him into a spiritual transformation journey:

> Wherefore the Blessed Francis, as a true Follower and Disciple of the Saviour, gave himself up from the beginning of his Conversion with all his Heart, with all his Strength, and with all his Mind, to seek and to find, to have and to hold the Lady Poverty, dreading no adversity, fearing no Evil, sparing no labour, shunning no suffering of the body, so only that he might come unto her to whom the Lord had given the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Like an eager explorer he began to go about the highways and by-ways of the City, diligently seeking her whom his

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[52] Ibid. pp. 288-289.

[53] Francis of Assissi. *The Lady Poverty: a XIII. century allegory*. Sacrum Commercium Beati Franoisci cum Domina Paupertate. Translated &, Edited by Montgomery Carmichael. London. John Murray, Albemarle Street. 1901

> Soul did love. He asked of those who stood about, he questioned those who met him, saying: Saw ye her whom my Soul loveth? [54]

Everyone hates poverty, so who could help Francis in his journey? One day he met two spiritual men on a field, and Francis talked with them:

> Tell me, I beseech you, where the Lady Poverty dwells, where she feeds her flock, where she takes her rest at noon, for I languish for the Love of her. But they answered him, saying: O good Brother, we have sat here for a Time, and Times, and half a Time, and have often seen her pass this way, and many were they who sought her. Many were they, once upon a time, who walked in her train, but oft she would return alone and desolate, unadorned by jewels or fine raiment, unescorted by any following. And she would weep bitterly, saying: The Sons of my Mother have fought against me. But we did answer and say: Have patience, for the Righteous love thee. And now, O Brother, ascend the great and high Mountain whereon the Lord hath placed her. For she dwelleth in the Holy Mountains, because God hath loved her more than all the tents of Jacob. Giants have failed to follow her footsteps, and the Eagle to fly to the summit of her Hill. Poverty is the one thing despised of all men, for it is not found in the land of them that live in delights. Wherefore she is hid from the eyes of the Living, and the fowls of the air know her not. But God understandeth her way; He knoweth her Dwelling-place. If therefore, O Brother, thou wouldst ascend unto her, put off the Garments of thy Pleasures and lay aside every weight and the Sin which besets thee, for unless thou art free from these trammels, thou canst not attain unto her who is placed at so great a height. But because My Lady is gracious, she is easily seen by those who

[54] Ibid.

> love her, and found by those who seek her. To meditate upon her, Brother, is perfect Understanding, and whoso watcheth for her shall speedily be secure. Take with thee trusty Companions that thou may'st profit by their Counsel, and be sustained by their Help in the way, for woe to him that is alone; when he falleth he shall have none to raise him up. But do you uphold one another.[55]

This marks the beginning of his journey, together with his companions. They climbed the mountain seeking Lady Poverty, and God valued their efforts to find her:

> And as with light feet they hastened to the summit of the Mountain, they beheld my Lady Poverty on the topmost Pinnacle gazing down the Mountain. And when she saw them climbing thus valiantly, nay, as it were, rather flying toward her, she marvelled exceedingly, and said to herself: Who are these that see fly like the Clouds and as Doves to their windows? It is long since I saw such as these, or looked upon men so free from trammels. Therefore will I speak to them of the things which I ponder in my Heart, lest, like the rest, they should repent them of their hardy ascent when they behold the dizzying abyss below. I know they cannot possess me without my consent, but I shall find Favour before my Heavenly Father if I give them the Counsels of Salvation. And behold a Voice spoke unto her, saying: Fear not, Daughter of Sion, for these are of the Seed which the Lord hath blessed. He hath elected them in Charity unfeigned. So from the Throne of her Neediness, the Lady Poverty presented them with Blessings of Sweetness, and said unto them: Tell me the cause of your Advent, my Brothers, and why you hasten thus speedily from the Valley of Tears to the Mountain of Light. Can it indeed

[55] Ibid.

> be that you seek me who am poor and needy, tossed by the tempest, and bereft of all consolation? And the Blessed Francis and his Companions answered her, saying: Yea, we have indeed come out to seek thee, Lady, and we beseech thee to receive us in Peace. We desire to become the Servants of the Lord of the Virtues, for He is the King of Glory. We have heard that thou art the Queen of the Virtues, and we have proved it by experience. Wherefore, prostrate at thy Feet, we humbly beseech thee to abide with us, and to light our Way to the King of Glory, as thou wast unto Him the Way, when, a Day-Spring from on High, He humbled Himself to visit them that sat in Darkness and the Shadow of Death.[56]

Saint Francis prays to Her, stating how Jesus loved poverty:

> Even before He left His bright Realms for the Earth, thou hadst prepared Him a fitting place, a Throne on which to sit, a Couch in which to rest, a most poor Virgin from whom He sprung, and shone upon the World. At His Nativity thou didst run to meet Him, so that He might find comfort in thee, and not in soft places. Manger, as saith the Evangelist, for there was no room in the Inn. And thus didst thou always inseparably accompany Him, so that during His whole Life, while He dwelt among Men, though the Foxes had Caves, and the Birds of the Air Nests, He had no place to lay His Head. And when He Who in the Past had opened the lips of the Prophets opened His own Lips to preach, among the many things which He spake, He first praised, first exalted thee, saying: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
>
> When He chose Witnesses to His Holy Preaching and to His glorious Work for the Salvation of Man, He did not take rich

[56] Ibid.

> Merchants, but poor Fisherfolk, that by this choice He might show forth that thou wert to be loved by All. And finally that thy Goodness, thy Greatness, thy Power, might be made manifest to All, and how thou art above all the Virtues, and how without thee there is no Virtue, and how thy Kingdom is not of this World but from Heaven, thou alone didst remain with the King of Glory when all His Elect and Beloved had fled from Him in Affright.
>
> Like unto a most dear Mistress and faithful Spouse, thou didst not leave Him for an instant. The more He was despised by All, the more didst thou cleave to Him.[57]

To what Lady Poverty responds, happy of their journey:

> To these Words my Lady Poverty, with joyful Heart, and cheerful Mien, and most sweet Voice, made answer, saying: I confess to you, my Brothers and most dear Friends, that from the moment you began to speak, I was filled with Gladness and exceeding great Joy, for I acknowledge your Fervour, and already know your Holy Intent; your words are dearer to me than Gold and Precious Stones, and sweeter far than Honey and the Honeycomb. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost that speaketh in you, and it is His Unction that inspires you in all the things which you have spoken concerning the Most High King, Who by His Grace alone chose me as His Beloved, taking away my Reproach among Men, and glorifying me among the Highest in Heaven.[58]

She then explained her story, starting with Adam's innocent times in complete poverty, full happiness, and how he sinned. She continued explaining the story of the Jews, the coming of Jesus, the

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Apostles, and the years until Saint Francis, how the enemies of poverty grew up: avarice, riches, sloth.

Finally, she explained to Francis their future spiritual journey:

> Dear Brothers, I have told you a long story, so that your eyes may behold where you go, and that you may see what you should do. It is perilous to look back and attempt to deceive God. Remember Lot's wife, and do not believe every Spirit. But I have confidence in you, dearest Brothers, for I see better Things in you than in any others, and you are nearer to Salvation. You seem to have abandoned Everything, and to have freed yourselves from all Burdens. And the best proof is this, that you have ascended this Mountain, which it is given to so few to do.
>
> I desire that each one of you should become a Follower of the Saints, who by Faith and Patience have come into my Inheritance. But because I dread lest the Fate of others should overtake you, I give you this salutary Counsel: that you should not in the Beginning aim at the Higher and more Hidden Things, but that, setting Christ before you, you should little by little come to the Highest Take heed lest, when the dung of Poverty has been laid about your Roots, you should after all be found barren, for then there will remain nothing but the Axe. Do not trust entirely to the Love which you now have, for Man is more prone to Evil than to Good, and the Soul easily returns to former Habits, even though it may long have been separated from them. I know that with your great Fervour all Things seem easy to you. But remember what is written: Behold they that serve Him are not steadfast, and in His Angels He found Wickedness. At first it will seem sweet to you to bear Anything, but after awhile, lulled in Security, you will become careless of the Blessings you have received. You will imagine that you can return to Him whenever you wish, and find the old consolation. But the Spirit of Negligence, once admitted, is not so easily got rid of. Your Heart will turn after other

> Things, but Reason will call you to return to the Former Things. Lapsed into Sloth and Idleness, Words of Excuse will rise easily to your Lips: We cannot be strong as we were in the Beginning, and now the Times are changed; not knowing that it is written: When a Man hath come to his End then would he make a Beginning. For a voice will always dwell in your Hearts, saying: Tomorrow, we will return to the former Man, for it was better with us then than it is now. Behold, I have foretold you many Things, my Brothers, and many other things have I to say unto you, which ye cannot bear now. But the Hour cometh when I shall speak to you plainly of All Things.[59]

Francis' embrace of poverty is a profound spiritual journey that led to new journeys.

As Joan Mueller states:

> Francis' voluntary poverty is a reconciling element. Persons not blinded by greed appreciate their place as creatures among creatures. Material and spiritual poverty renders followers of Francis available to others and to God, and prevents them from being a stumbling block to the poor. Those who treasure poverty embrace the poor, crucified Christ more and more completely in order to effect in their own lives the joy of having nothing other than God.[60]

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Mueller, Joan. "Franciscan reconciliation. The struggle to embrace Joy." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. p. 47.

Spirituality transforms us: for Saint John of the Cross, through "participation" the person is born anew, rediscovering the reality as flowing from the love of God

John of the Cross Spiritual Canticle expresses a soul's spiritual journey toward a deeper intimacy with God.

Through meditation, a person has a dialogue with reality. The soul asks about God, and the reality responds by expressing some details about God's beauty and responding that deeper intimacy with God requires that the soul asks for it directly from God. Through his poems, John expresses how the soul starts receiving God's responses, guidance, and, ultimately, a loving relationship between God and the soul.

Initially, the creatures helped him in that journey, in which the soul asks the creatures:

> "O woods and thickets, planted by the hand of my Beloved! O green meadow, coated, bright, with flowers, tell me, has he passed by you?," and the creatures respond: "Pouring out a thousand graces, he passed these groves in haste; and having looked at them, with his image alone, clothed them in beauty.[61]

This response is not enough for the soul, and this leads him to a spiritual search, a transformation journey toward knowing and loving God and being transformed by his love.

James Arraj[62] explains how Saint John of the Cross presents the transit from meditation to infused contemplation as a journey toward

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[61] John of the Cross,. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

[62] Arraj, James. *From Saint John of the Cross to us. The story of a 400 year long misunderstanding and what it means for the future of Christian mysticism*. Inner growth books. 1999. Oregon.

knowing and loving God, which may be painful. It usually starts with discursive prayers, moving toward peaceful knowledge, loving presence of God. However, the journey is arid, dry, hard to perceive, God slowly takes control, but the person does not realize it. It is a process of purification of the senses, weaknesses, limitations, growing in humility, peacefulness; this process is painful initially, but it leads to more profound loving knowledge, peace, solitary refreshment.

The last stanzas of the Spiritual Canticle describe how the "participation" in God's reality inspires and transforms the soul in a variety of ways, purifying the soul, building virtues, weakening passions, controlling the imagination, healing the grief:

> Catch us the foxes, For our vineyard has flourished; While of roses We make a nosegay, And let no one appear on the hill.
> O killing north wind, cease! Come, south wind, that awakens love! Blow through my garden, And let its odors flow, And the Beloved shall feed among the flowers.
> O nymphs of Judea! While amid the flowers and the rose-trees The amber sends forth its perfume, Tarry in the suburbs, And touch not our thresholds.
> Hide yourself, O my Beloved! Turn Your face to the mountains, Do not speak, But regard the companions Of her who is traveling amidst strange islands.[63]

God inspires and transforms the soul as John describes:

> Light-winged birds, Lions, fawns, bounding does, Mountains, valleys, strands, Waters, winds, heat, And the terrors that keep watch by night; By the soft lyres And the siren strains, I adjure

[63] John of the Cross. *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and of Christ the Bridegroom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/j/john_cross/canticle/cache/canticle.pdf

you, Let your fury cease, And touch not the wall, That the bride may sleep in greater security.[64]

And after this transformation, there is a second transformation, leading the soul into loving God:

The bride has entered The pleasant and desirable garden, And there reposes to her heart's content; Her neck reclining On the sweet arms of the Beloved.
Beneath the apple-tree. There were you betrothed; There I gave you My hand, And you were redeemed Where your mother was corrupted.[65]

The soul describes this transformation:

Our bed is of flowers By dens of lions encompassed, Hung with purple, Made in peace, And crowned with a thousand shields of gold.
In Your footsteps The young ones run Your way; At the touch of the fire And by the spiced wine, The divine balsam flows.
In the inner cellar Of my Beloved have I drunk; and when I went forth Over all the plain I knew nothing, And lost the flock I followed before.
There He gave me His breasts, There He taught me the science full of sweetness. And there I gave to Him Myself without reserve; There I promised to be His bride.[66]

John introduces the participation in God's reality and the transformation it produces in us:

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

There you will show me, That which my soul desired; And there You will give at once, O You, my life, That which You gave me the other day.

The breathing of the air, the song of the sweet nightingale, the grove and its beauty in the serene night, with the flame that consumes, and gives no pain.[67]

As John explains:

> The breathing of the air, is a certain faculty which God will there give the soul in the communication of the Holy Spirit, Who, like one breathing, raises the soul by His divine aspiration, informs it, strengthens it, so that it too may breathe in God with the same aspiration of love which the Father breathes with the Son, and the Son with the Father, which is the Holy Spirit Himself, Who is breathed into the soul in the Father and the Son in that transformation so as to unite it to Himself: God has bestowed upon it so great a favor as to unite it to the most Holy Trinity, whereby it becomes like God, and God by participation.
>
> The song of the sweet nightingale, out of this "breathing of the air" comes the sweet voice of the Beloved addressing Himself to the soul, filling the ear with melody, and the mind with joy, in the true intercourse and transformation of love; the grove and its beauty, contains many plants and animals, signifies God as the Creator and Giver of life to all creatures.
>
> In the serene night, in contemplation, in which the soul desires to behold the grove, without the sound of words, or the intervention of any bodily or spiritual sense, as it were in silence and in repose, in the darkness of sense and nature, God teaches the soul in a most secret and hidden way.

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[67] Ibid.

> With the flame that consumes, means absolute perfection, love, to be perfect, must consume and transform the soul in God.[68]

Hein Bloomestijn[69] explains how in the "Spiritual Canticle," Saint John of the Cross presented a spiritual transformation process. The person is born anew in his soul, his affective life, consciousness, and spiritual receptivity. The person rediscovers the reality as flowing from God's love and learns to see the reality from God's eyes.

Spirituality transforms us: for Saint John of the Cross, in the Dark Night, purification of the senses and the spirit, spiritual illumination, and union with God through love

Saint John of the Cross wrote two of his books, "The Ascent of Mount Carmel" and "The Dark Night," which rely on the same poem:

1. One dark night, fired with love's urgent longings -ah, the sheer grace!- I went out unseen, my house being now all stilled.
2. In darkness, and secure, by the secret ladder, disguised, -ah, the sheer grace!- in darkness and concealment, my house being now all stilled.
3. On that glad night, in secret, for no one saw me, nor did I look at anything, with no other ligh t or guide than the one that burned in my heart.

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Bloomestijn, Hein. "Discovering the self and the world through the eyes of God. A selective reading of the Spiritual Canticle." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2016.

4. This guided me more surely than the light of noon to where he was awaiting me -him I knew so well there in a place where no one appeared.
5. O guiding night! O night more lovely than the dawn! O night that has united the Lover with his beloved, transforming the beloved in her Lover.
6. Upon my flowering breast which I kept wholly for him alone, there he lay sleeping, and I caressing him there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.
7. When the breeze blew from the turret, as I parted his hair, it wounded my neck with its gentle hand, suspending all my senses.
8. I abandoned and forgot myself, laying my face on my Beloved; all things ceased; I went out from myself, leaving my cares forgotten among the lilies.[70]

As John explains in the prologue of the Ascent:

> A deeper enlightenment and wider experience than mine is necessary to explain the dark night through which a soul journeys toward that divine light of perfect union with God that is achieved, insofar as possible in this life, through love. The darknesses and trials, spiritual and temporal, that fortunate souls ordinarily undergo on their way to the high state of perfection are so numerous and profound that human science cannot understand them adequately. Nor does experience of them equip one to explain them. Only those who suffer them will know what this experience is like, but they won 't be able to describe it.[71]

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[70] John of the Cross. The Ascent of Mount Carmel. The Dark Night. The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross. Revised edition. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, 0. C. D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. ICS Publications. Institute of Carmelite Studies. Washington, D.C.

[71] Ibid. pp. 114-115.

And John explains in the prologue of the Night:

> The first two stanzas describe the effects of the two kinds of spiritual purgation that take place in a person: one, a purification of the sensory part; the other, a purification of the spiritual part. The remaining six stanzas speak of some of the marvelous results obtained from spiritual illumination and union with God through love.[72]

Jose Damián Gaitán[73] discusses how the Ascent drawing to Mount Carmel, the mount in the Old Testament, reflects God's presence and experience, showing tension by contrasting the three roads to reach the mount's top. There is only one path that leads to God, to life.

The Dark Night is the road toward union, the experience of faith, nakedness, and purgation, of evangelical poverty, the path toward the union of love with the beloved.

Jose Damián Gaitán[74] describes how John learned by experience a life of detachment, hard experiences, of evangelical radicalism, which is expressed in the drawing of the "Ascent to the Mount Carmel," symbolizing the poem "Ascent" and "Dark Night."

Hein Bloomestijn[75] describes how John of the Cross, in the "Dark Night of the Soul," explains his spiritual transformation toward a personal union with God.

Bloomestijn states the impediments, personal imperfections that we need to liberate ourselves. We need a transition: from the "senses" who initially contact us with the reality that helps us search

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[72] Ibid. p. 158.

[73] Gaitán, José Damián. "Subida del Monte Carmelo" y "Noche Oscura." Teresiamnn 40 (1989/2) 289-335.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Bloomestijn, Hein. "The Dark Night in John of the Cross. The transformational process." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2016.

for God, to the "spirit" to be receptive to God's self-revelation, to contemplate God and strengthen our love, and to transition to the union with God.

Steven Wlusek[76] explains how John has named the three stages of the spiritual journey: 1) the Night of the Senses, 2) the Night of the Spirit, and 3) the Living Flame of Love. These three stages correspond, in a sense, to Dionysius' purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways.

Karol Wojtyła[77] explains how, in the spiritual transformation, love increases the union. Love has a transforming power in which God's and the souls' will converge. God communicates his supernatural being to us, leading to participation, love, and transformation; love is the unifying force.

José López Sánchez[78] explains how in the Ascent, John describes the transformation by love, a likeness of love, a union of likeness: "the soul more like God than soul, and it is even God by participation." The dark night is a process of purification of our imperfections and enlightening by the light of God.

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[76] Wlusek, Steven. The foundations of St John of the Cross' spiritual theology in the thought and writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. *Studies in Spirituality* 18, 195-213. doi: 10.2143/SIS.18.0.2033289. 2008.

[77] Wojtyła, Karol. *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*. Translated by Jordan Aumann, O.P. The original text "Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce" was a doctoral thesis presented at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome. Wipf & Stock, Oregon. 1981

[78] López Sánchez, José. En torno a la experiencia mística. *Revista Española de Teología* 60 (2000) 85-97.

Spirituality transforms us: for Karol Wojtyła, common-sense morality

John J. Conley, S.J.,[79] proposes an insight into how the interaction between Thomism and phenomenology provides valuable ethical support:

> These two seminal encyclicals [Veritatis Splendor and Evangelium Vitae] […] the phenomenological and Thomistic strands in John Paul II's philosophy serve a common anthropological project - the defense of the besieged human person in contemporary society - by showing that the person cannot be reduced to a material phenomenon and cannot be used a means toward a putative social end.[80]

Tarasiewicz concludes on how Wojtyła's insights provide a solid foundation to a new common-sense morality:

> Morality can be accompanied either by joy and spiritual contentment, when contains the moral good, or by despair and sorrow, when contains the moral evil. For Wojtyła, our feelings are or can be indicators of the moral content of our decisions; they bear witness to the maturity of our own personhood and humanity; they are the way through which the reality of morality manifests itself to us. […] Only when based on the metaphysical interpre-

[79] Conley, S.J, John J. "Philosophy and Anti-Philosophy: The Ambiguous Legacy of John Paul II." *Karol Wojtyła's philosophical legacy*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. Washington. 2007.

[80] Ibid. p. 38.

> tation of man, the phenomenological insight into the moral experience of a human person can enjoy its special status in the personalism of Saint John Paul II.[81]

This way, as Bouyer states, spirituality, psychology and morality support each other.

Spirituality transforms us: for Joseph Ratzinger, the relationship with God in human history, healing and transforming the person and community

As William Patenaude[82] explains, Joseph Ratzinger presents this transformation process, framed on a broader picture of human history. Following Bonaventure's insights, Ratzinger explains how the revelation provides an understanding of history, revelation interacting with humanity's history of love, as the driving force leading to the fullness of truth and souls' salvation. For Ratzinger, human history is not the accumulation of personal actions; instead, it is each person's capacity and desire to be in relation with God and others in loving interactions; it is a community drama.

According to Patenaude, Ratzinger was impressed by Augustine's "City of God." The City of God describes the horror of witnessing how the Roman Empire collapsed to Germanic invaders and how Christian love was the energy and antidote to lead to a new world. Today, the City of God is a foundational guide to overcome Western difficulties, based on a dialogue between God and humankind. God may interact in this process, assisting personal decision-

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[81] Tarasiewicz, Pawel. "The common sense personalism of St. John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła)." *Studia Gilsoniana*. 2014. John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Poland. p. 631.

[82] Patenaude, William L. *Loving in the Present: The Theological and Pastoral Influences of Saint Bonaventure's Critical Retrieval of Joachim of Fiore on Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI*. Theology graduate thesis. Providence College. http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/theology_graduate_theses

making, empowering, influencing the outcomes of actions, providing desired or unexpected alternatives, aligning endeavors with his overall plan, or granting his assistance in response to personal wishes. People can actively participate and exercise God's providence. Aligned with the Providence, people may love their neighbors, fulfilling their ultimate end of happiness.

Spirituality transforms us: in modernity it impacts on social and political dimensions

Waaijman[83] describes how spirituality played different roles in the history of humanity: non-conformists, rebellious, revolutionary movements who resisted the establishment such as the spirituality of the prophets against the kings or the Israelites, the spirituality of Moses against Pharaoh, the spirituality of the Buddha, the spirituality of the monks of the desert abandoning the "world," of saints such as Saint Francis of Assisi or Joan d'Arc, of the Latin American liberation movements, the Black liberation movement, Feminists.

John Main made clear how meditation helps people to go beyond their self-centeredness. Meditation helps to build an ethical mind; as John Main states, the mantra is like the needle of a compass, always heading in the right direction:

> Simply saying the mantra commits us to living out the consequences of saying the mantra… We can't meditate every day and continue to pursue a policy of deception, of self-interest, of revenge. However gradually, we must also begin to commit ourselves to truthfulness, to love, to God. Therefore it is our spiritual life which transforms the world. As our moral integrity begins to develop, our actions will inevitably begin to change. And

[83] Waaijman, Kees. Espiritualidad. Formas, fundamentos y métodos. Ediciones Sígueme. 2011. Salamanca. Spain. pp. 456-480.

so the reality of the world we live in, the world of social, political, or religious beings, begin to change as well.[84]

[84] Freeman, Laurence. *Light Within: Meditation as Pure Prayer.* Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd. 2008. London. U.K. p. 18.

IX.

SPIRITUALITY HEALS US

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the ninth dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: the power to heal us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The power to heal that spirituality generates is an extraordinary source of happiness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter is crucial for our lives, political economy and decision making: the same intuitions of previous chapters are repeated here, becoming aware of our power to heal provides us confidence, faith, hope, energy which enlighten, inspire and energize our lives, promoting transcendence, to heal others, participating in God's communitarian mission, promoting values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, promoting social engagement, relying on our power to heal to build teams, task forces, and people willing to heal communities with communities that need such healing, promoting cooperation, compassion, solidarity, and social action.

There is scientific evidence of the positive emotional effects of spirituality: lower anxiety, addictions, diseases, personal control; less stress, regulated emotions, lower ADHD, less HIV; less disease, better behavior, wellbeing, health, lower depression.

There is scientific evidence of the positive emotional effects of religion on health: longer life, more social life, less depression, shorter hospital stays, better healthy behaviors, less drug abuse, wellbeing, life satisfaction, less hostility, less suicide, and better tolerance of pain.

World peace results from our physical, emotional, and spiritual healing and our role in helping others in their healing.

Summary of the chapter

Any person can experience that spirituality heals the soul and the body, helps to live in the present, reduces anxiety, and provides the will to heal, let go, and the "unloading of the unconscious," leading to personal interior peace and healing addictions, healing relationships.

Any person can experience that spirituality provides a shelter to survive the complexities of our existence, provides peace, energy, life, helps to fight, to overcome suffering, accept reality actively, and accept limitations.

Spirituality plays a central role in building wisdom, clarifying our ideas and enriching our knowledge, helping us to discover our true self, which is a central factor in most psychotherapies, especially Cognitive Therapy; spirituality plays a central role in Bowen Family System Therapy, learning to be mature, differentiated, living our lives as a journey toward beauty, goodness, truth, and love; spirituality plays a central role in the Enneagram, helping us to build relationships based on the wisdom that spirituality provides to overcome our shadow areas; spirituality helps us to find meanings, which is central to Logotherapy; it helps us to transforms us, our behaviors, which is central in behavior modification therapies; it plays a central role on the Twelve Steps, the most used therapy to heal addictions.

Reintegrating spirituality, religiosity, psychology, and affections is crucial to fostering health.

Spirituality heals us by building transcendence, finding the meaning of life, helping us to live in the present, reducing the anxiety linked to the past and future, providing peace, a shelter to survive the complexities of our existence.

Spirituality heals us by building values, integrating the person and community, lowering anxiety and depression, promoting better behavior and lifestyle, and general wellbeing.

Spirituality heals us by building a meaningful connection with a higher reality, leading to inner peace, freedom, harmony.

Spirituality heals us by providing energy, life, the will to heal, to let go, to get rid of addictions, transforming suffering.

Spirituality and religiosity lead to emotional health: peace, wellbeing, growth

Zorka Hereford[1] considers spirituality "to be a state in which we are connected to God, Nature, each other, and the deepest part of ourselves." To do that, she recommends:

> Take time for yourself, rejuvenate your spirit and nurture yourself by listening to relaxing music, read inspirational literature; get a massage; help those in need of your assistance; practice gratitude; practice mindfulness, become aware of your environment, of yourself, enjoy the colors and smells of nature around you, enjoy the feel of rain falling on your nose and the wind blowing on your face; express yourself, in artistic or expressive activities, dance, sing, play a musical instrument, or take art lessons.[2]

Susan Muto[3] sees spirituality as a journey that leads to maturity, balance, intimacy, generativity, holding without holding, loving without controlling, with humility, charity, and detachment as guidelines for maturity at a personal level, to reach a mature intimacy. Spiritu-

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[1] Hereford, Zorka. *What is Spirituality?* https://www.essentiallife-skills.net/what-is-spirituality.html.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Muto, Susan. *Growing in wisdom, age and grace through everyday intimacy*. Copy presented in the supporting material folder of the "Spiritual Direction Program" at Sacred Heart University.

ality grows in today's secularized world, out of the personal experience, from below, emerging from a psychological, therapeutic way to strengthen the self, a way to cope with reality. People look for spiritual peace, wellbeing, growth, and wonder.

Spirituality and psychology in the Bible: the relationship with God heals the soul, leads to peace, promotes love, freedom, harmony

The Bible repeatedly expresses how a Trinitarian God promotes love and spirituality, leading to peace, harmony, caring for others' lives, health, and well-being.

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John DeBeer[4] show how the relationship with the God of the Bible, His presence, how the gospel heals the soul. God promotes love and compassion, maturity, integrity, consciousness, activity, discipline in the life of faith.

As McGinn[5] describes, Evagrius Ponticus was the master of John Cassian. He considered that pure prayer or true prayer "is the gradual stripping away of all images and forms in order to attain formless and conceptless direct contact Trinity; prayer is the continual intercourse of the spirit with God." This produces the freedom of the soul, not disturbed by passions or emotions. It requires a purification of the soul from demons, toward health, "when the spirit begins to see its own light, when it remains in a state of tranquility in the presence of the images it has during sleep and when it maintains its calm as it beholds the affairs of life. Such freedom of the soul bears the highest form of love as its child."

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[4] O'Connell Killen, Patricia and John DeBeer. *The art of theological reflection*. Crossroad Publishing Co. 1994. New York.

[5] McGinn, Bernard. The Foundations of Western Mysticism. Origins to the fifth century. The Crossroad publishing company. 1991. New York. pp. 150-151.

The Holy Spirit heals the soul, makes us free

The Holy Spirit fills our souls with gifts of wisdom, faith, healing, prophesy, discernment, tongues, mercy, and supplication:

> 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; And there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom: and to another, the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; To another, faith in the same spirit; to another, the grace of healing in one Spirit; To another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the discerning of spirits; to another, diverse kinds of tongues; to another, interpretation of speeches. But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will.
>
> Acts 10:44-47. While Peter was yet speaking these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And the faithful of the circumcision, who came with Peter, were astonished, for that the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they heard them speaking with tongues, and magnifying God. Then Peter answered: Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?
>
> Zechariah 12:10. And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers: and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced.

The Holy Spirit gives us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control:

> John 20:21-23. He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.
>
> Galatians 5:22-23. But the fruit of the Spirit is, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, Mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. Against such there is no law.

It changes our behaviors, makes us free, courageous:

> Acts 2:38. But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
>
> Acts 5:32. And we are witnesses of these things and the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to all that obey him.
>
> 2 Corinthians 3:17. Now the Lord is a Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:5-7. Now he that maketh us for this very thing, is God, who hath given us the pledge of the Spirit. Therefore having always confidence, knowing that, while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, and not by sight.
>
> Ephesians 1:13-14. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him,

were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Spirituality connects psychology, knowledge, relationships, nature, finding the meaning of life

Spirituality is connected with psychology: awareness, consciousness, mindfulness, connection with nature, finding the meaning of life.

Louis Bouyer[6] discusses what spirituality means by analyzing the difference between religious life, spiritual life, and interior life. A religious life refers to the relationship with a superior being, transcendent deity, a god, even if the relationship is reflected only in behaviors. A spiritual life with no God refers to the detachment from religion found in Buddhism, detachment from all being, cosmic, human, or divine. An interior life refers to aspects related to the soul, to the connection with our consciousness, emotional aspects such as poetry, music, connected with dreams, although it may not be necessarily spiritual. A genuinely spiritual life somehow implies some degree of connection among them all.

Bouyer explains how phenomenology helps to connect the different views of spirituality. According to Bouyer, phenomenology shows how "it is impossible to separate subjective psychology from the objects toward it is oriented," the concept of "intentionality" discussed above. A religious understanding of spirituality is intrinsically connected with a psychological understanding of spirituality. Since spirituality is connected with consciousness, it can impact behaviors, introducing the insights of moral philosophy. Spirituality is connected with religion, leading to the introduction of fundamental theology, which also impacts moral dimensions.

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[6] Bouyer, Louis. *Introduction to spirituality*. Liturgical Press. Minnesota. 1961.

Psychology, spirituality, consciousness: seeking a meaningful connection with something bigger

In "Taking charge of your health and wellbeing,"[7] the University of Minnesota presents three definitions of spirituality, in which psychology and spirituality have a strong connection:

- Christina Puchalski, MD, Director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, contends that "spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way persons seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and the significant or sacred."
- According to Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary, researchers and authors of The Spiritual Brain, "spirituality means any experience that is thought to bring the experiencer into contact with the divine (in other words, not just any experience that feels meaningful)."
- Nurses Ruth Beckmann Murray and Judith Proctor Zenter write that "the spiritual dimension tries to be in harmony with the universe, and strives for answers about the infinite, and comes into focus when the person faces emotional stress, physical illness, or death."[8]

In their views, spirituality is connected with the following questions: Am I a good person? What is the meaning of my suffering? What is my connection to the world around me? Do things happen for a reason? How can I live my life in the best way possible?

[7] https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/
[8] https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-spirituality

In their view, spirituality involves contemplation, meditation, reflection, journaling, writing one's life story, paying attention to dreams.

They provide a contrast between spirituality and emotional health:

- Spirituality is about seeking a meaningful connection with something bigger than yourself, resulting in positive emotions, such as peace, awe, contentment, gratitude, and acceptance.
- Emotional health is about cultivating a positive state of mind, which can broaden your outlook to recognize and incorporate a connection to something larger than yourself.[9]

Centering Prayer leads to the "unloading of the unconscious"

Thomas Keating, William Menninger, and Basil Pennington, three Cistercian monks, are the fathers of "Centering Prayer." They were exposed to Zen and Hinduism by 1960. Centering prayer seeks to harmonize Eastern wisdom with the Christian contemplative tradition.

As Glenn Chicoine explains:

> It requires to sit in a comfortable chair before God in faith, to pray simply for God to "come," to close one's eyes, and to breathe normally. One has chosen a "love word," or prayer word. The word should be part of sacred tradition, like "Lord," or "Jesus." Extending back to Biblical times in a number of subtly related ways, this form of prayer, as noted, is better called a type of "prayer of the heart." In this sense, the "heart," as is well known, is one's "center" or the center of one's soul or being. From

[9] Ibid.

within one's heart, one next lovingly "intones" or simply says the love word toward, or in, God.

Such prayerful centering has Biblical associations, if not a Biblical basis. A cloud and Gods glory descended upon the tent of meeting and tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35). Solomon prayed for a "listening heart" NAB, or "a heart to understand" NJB (1 Kgs 3:9). God placed his Eternity, incomprehensible in toto, within us (Eccl 3:11). Elijah heard God in a "still small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12b [KJV]). The psalmist acknowledged to God—when begging for mercy and forgiveness of his sins, while concomitantly knowing his sins and keeping them ever before himself—that "you desire true sincerity," and that "secretly you teach me wisdom" (Ps 51:8 [NAB]). Mary pondered the unfolding events and situations of Divine Incarnation "in her heart" (Lk 2:19). Jesus taught "Blessed are the poor in spirit, / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "Blessed are the clean of heart, / for they will see God" (Mt 5:3 and 8).

Jesus taught us to go into our inner room, close the door, and pray to the Father in secret without multiplying words, and "your Father who sees in secret will repay you" (Mt 6:6-8). The phrase, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," said humbly with head bowed, was approved by Jesus as a prayer or prayerful attitude in the temple (Lk 18:9-14). At the Transfiguration, after they beheld Jesus in glory along with Moses and Elijah, Peter, James, and John were covered by the shadow of a "bright cloud" in, from, or through which the Father spoke affirming Jesus as his "beloved Son." When (so to speak) the smoke cleared, and Jesus touched and encouraged them, "they saw no one else but Jesus alone," and continued with the ongoing challenges of their ministry (Mt 17:1-8). "Therefore, stay awake!" (Mt 24:42a). "Watch

> and pray that you may not undergo the test" (26:41). "What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!' (Mk 13:37)."[10]

Thomas Keating[11] explains how meditation and contemplation lead to emotional healing, which he calls the "unloading of the unconscious." Through childhood and life events, the unconscious is formed, and together with that, people develop what Keating calls: the false self. He explains how, through silent meditation, these events start leaving the unconscious, like emptying a garbage can, a psychological purification, getting rid of fear, anxiety, anger, emotional turmoil, a restructuring of the unconscious, by discovering, in silence, who we are, our worth.

As Keating expresses, many Catholics are dissatisfied with the legalistic and over moralistic education that they received in their parishes: "if we are afraid of God, or see God as an angry father figure, a suspicious policeman, or a harsh judge, it will be hard to develop enthusiasm, or even an interest, in the journey." This leads to unconscious attitudes: we are convinced that external acts (rituals or the exercise of good works) are more important than personal internal motives (pride, superego, versus genuine love). Some believe that they must initiate good works, and God rewards or punishes them; their main concern is getting to heaven instead of exercising the love of God here and now.

Thomas Keating explains the spiritual dynamics of centering prayer: 1. We first read by getting its literal sense, the historical facts, their message; 2. The second dimension is to focus on its application, the moral side; 3. The third dimension is allegorical: we see ourselves as part of the story, what role we play, how the story relates to us,

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[10] Chicoine, Glenn. A Defense of Centering Prayer. *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 54.3 (2019). pp. 323-325

[11] Keating, Thomas; Pennington, Basil. *Centering Prayer, in Daily Life and Ministry*. Edited by Gustave Reininger. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. New York. 2006.

how it impacts us, our emotions, how it helps to unload our unconscious; we experience the readings as part of our inner reality, we use symbols as part of our reality, we see the characters of the scriptures as if we were in each one of them, our experiences, our lives; 4. The last dimension is unitive, our relationship with God, our feelings for God, as if God were talking to us, and we were talking to God through the scriptures.

According to MaryEllen O'Brien[12], William of Saint Thierry presents a theology of transformative healing, as the result of our participation in God's life, on becoming more a reflection of God.

Eastern religions and spiritualities such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism lead to emotional healing through wholeness and integration produced at three levels: personal, community, cosmic. They heal brokenness and fragmentation, produce freedom from internal and external bondage, and lead to authenticity, coherence of all levels and dimensions of the self, community, cosmic, and nature. This healing leads to silence, stillness, harmony, peace, equanimity, and happiness. A non-religious new age spirituality leads to emotional healing through meditation, a holistic natural lifestyle.

Meditation is a journey to personal and social healing

Balfour M. Mount[13] explains how meditation is a journey to personal and social healing. Mount and Pat Boston "carried out a qualitative research study with people experiencing life-threatening illness, to see if there are common themes that separate those who find healing

[12] O'Brien, MaryEllen. "A theology of transformative healing in the monastic teaching of William of Saint Thierry." *Studies on spirituality*. Peeters. 2016.

[13] Mount, Balfour M. *Journey to personal and social transformation*. John Main, the expanded vision. Canterbury Press. Norwich. 2009.

and those who find wounding." They found five themes in both situations:

1. A sense of isolation and disconnection, versus a sense of connection, experienced at four levels: a connection to oneself, a connection to others, a connection to the phenomenal world perceived through the five senses, and connection to ultimate meaning (God, cosmos).
2. A crisis of meaning, an existential vacuum with an inability to find solace or peace in anything, versus a sense of meaning in the context of illness and suffering.
3. Anxious preoccupation with the future or ongoing rumination about the past versus a capacity to enter the present moment and find peace there.
4. A sense of victimization versus the experience of sympathetic connection to their suffering.
5. A need to be in control, versus openness to potential, with the ability to choose a response to their dire situation.

Mount explains the factors that lead to healing:

- Volition, the will to heal, active initiation of the healing process on our part, nobody can do it for us.
- Presence, live in the present, not worrying about the future or occupied with the past, valuing the world, loving others.
- Opening to suffering, to descent into the unknown, to others.
- Accepting the reality actively, not passively.
- Humility, accepting my own limitations and shortcomings, that we are all in the same boat.
- Letting go or learning to fall.

Meditation leads to discovering our true self

Murchadh O Madagain[14] explains how we develop a false self: "Daddy loves you if you eat your vegetables" therefore, to be loved, we need to carry on certain deeds or fears; we are not loved for who we are, but for what we do. "Hello, my name is John. I am an accountant;" we believe that what we do is what makes us lovable; what others think of us is vital for our happiness.

Meditation heals that wound by discovering, in silence, who we are, our actual worth. Those moments of meditation produce a profound peace in our souls; we will not do anything against our authentic selves during the day. We will stand firm to defend our value, and we do not want to break that inner peace.

Meditation leads to reduction of anxiety

According to John Main and Lawrence Freeman, meditation helps to live in the present, reduce the anxieties connected to the past, let the past go away, and reduce the anxieties connected to the future, fears, and the need to have everything under control.

John R. Finney and H. Newton Malony[15] provide a view on how contemplative prayer has a positive impact on our psychology: "when contemplative prayer is used as an adjunct to psychotherapy, therapeutic benefits such as desensitization and reduction of anxiety are likely to occur." Contemplative prayer leads to the presence of the Divine, which provides a religious meaning to reality.

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[14] O Madagain, Murchadh. *Centering prayer and the healing of the unconscious*. Lantern books. New York. 2007.

[15] Finney, John R.; H. Malony, Newton. "Contemplative Prayer and Its Use in Psychotherapy: A Theoretical Model." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 1985, Vol. 13, No. 3, 172-181. Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University, 0091-6471/4107-3000.

Meditation leads to personal interior peace

Daniel De Pablo Maroto[16] describes how spirituality produces interior peace: "The mystical experiences of God generate peace, tranquility, quiet, rest, calm, serenity, they have a therapeutic function, a sedative for the troubled world of human instincts and passions":

> Authentic Christian mysticism forms total persons, establishes in the soul the great human and religious values, creates a new man (Ephesians, 2, 15 ff.; 2 Corinthians, 5, 17; Colossians, 3, 9), changing the heart of stone into a heart of flesh (Jeremiah 31, 33), Ezekiel (36, 27; 37, 4).
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> As Therese of Jesus states "This stillness and recollection of the soul is 'something that is very much felt in the satisfaction and peace that is placed in it, with great joy and calm of the powers and very gentle delight'" (Life 15:1). It is a fountain of water that flows in the depths of the human being inhabited by God who causes "great peace and quiet and softness" in the interior of ourselves; it is a "contentment and delight" that is not felt at first in the heart, but "then everything swells up, and this water flows back through all the dwellings and powers until it reaches the body, which is why I said that it begins from God and ends in us All exterior man enjoys this taste and softness" (Dwellings, IV, 2, 4). The 'Kiss me with the kiss of your mouth' of the Song of Songs "is a sign of peace and great friendship between two people."
>
> For Saint John of the Cross, peace begins with the inner pacification of the human being, subjected to the dissolving forces of evil tendencies, what he calls the "appetites." Once the purifying action has been completed through the "nights" of the

[16] De Pablo Maroto, Daniel. Los místicos cristianos, creadores de la paz. *Salmanticensis* 51 (2004) 5-41. Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.

> senses and the spirit, both actively and passively, man conquers the true interior peace, calm, rest, leisure, quiet, rest, serenity, tranquility, that is transparent in social and political life. In this climate of purification, other mystical experiences come about, such as the "spiritual wedding," which "denotes a high state and union of love," and the soul is left "adorned with the good things I say, begin for her a state of peace and delight and of gentleness of love," "rivers of peace." Each of the virtues in itself is peaceful, gentle, and strong, and therefore in the soul that possesses them, these three effects are appropriate: peace, meekness and strength.[17]

Spirituality impacts on attitudes, values, behaviors, the meaning of life

Larry Culliford[18] provides a psychological view of spirituality, focusing on attitudes, values, motivation at the deepest level, impacting thoughts and behaviors, the meaning of life, the place in the community: "Why not think of the spiritual dimension as a kind of adventure playground, a place to learn in and have fun, a place in which to extend yourself, to grow?"

Maya Spencer also provides a psychological, religious, phenomenological, and ethical view of spirituality, providing emotional healing:

> Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature. Spirituality

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Culliford, Larry. "Spiritual Wisdom for Secular Times." *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/201103/what-is-spirituality.

> means knowing that our lives have significance in a context beyond a mundane everyday existence at the level of biological needs that drive selfishness and aggression. It means knowing that we are a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of Life in our universe. Spirituality involves exploring certain universal themes – love, compassion, altruism, life after death, wisdom and truth, with the knowledge that some people such as saints or enlightened persons have achieved and manifested higher levels of development than the ordinary person. Aspiring to manifest the attributes of such inspirational examples often becomes an important part of the journey through life for spiritually inclined people. The spiritual journey involves first healing and affirming the ego so that positive states are experienced; with secure self-esteem, belief in self-worth and a capacity for love and generosity, a person becomes less constrained by ego defences. An opening of the heart is an essential aspect of true spirituality. [19]

Spirituality is part of the Enneagram, to heal the person and relationships

The Enneagram, a psychological analytical model, shows the value of spirituality to heal us by healing our relationships. The Enneagram helps us know ourselves, our personality, especially our shadow side, how it impacts our relationality, how it gets on the way to happiness, and the harmony with others and the community.

Oscar Ichazo developed the Enneagram in 1960, with roots in mystical Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Daoism, Buddhism, and ancient Greek philosophy. The Enneagram believes that people live

[19] Spencer, Maya. *What is spirituality? A personal exploration*. https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/members/sigs/spirituality-spsig/what-is-spirituality-maya-spencer-x.pdf?sfvrsn=f28df052_2.

different experiences that lead everyone to move in different directions through childhood, find different responses, solutions, and refuges.

> The Enneagram is a powerful tool for personal and collective transformation. Stemming from the Greek words ennea (nine) and grammos (a written symbol), the nine-pointed Enneagram symbol represents nine distinct strategies for relating to the self, others and the world. Each Enneagram type has a different pattern of thinking, feeling and acting that arises from a deeper inner motivation or worldview. Learning about these patterns fosters greater understanding through a universal language that transcends gender, religion, nationality and culture. While we are all unique, we share common experiences.[20]

This definition shows that the Enneagram is aligned with the "phenomenological intentionality" discussed in this book: it connects our self, with others, with the world, with our spirituality, our psychology, and our behaviors.

Bergin and Fitzgerald[21] show how some people escape to or find refuge in the heart, some in the guts, some in the mind. Moreover, some people go to the "wing" of the social, balanced, or inner worlds even in that refuge. This gives origin to nine refuges that people resort through life.

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[20] *The Narrative Enneagram*. https://www.enneagramworldwide.com/the-enneagram/

[21] Bergin, Eilis and Eddie Fitzgerald. *An Enneagram Guide: A Spirituality of Love in Brokenness*. Twenty Third Publications. 1995. New London, CT.

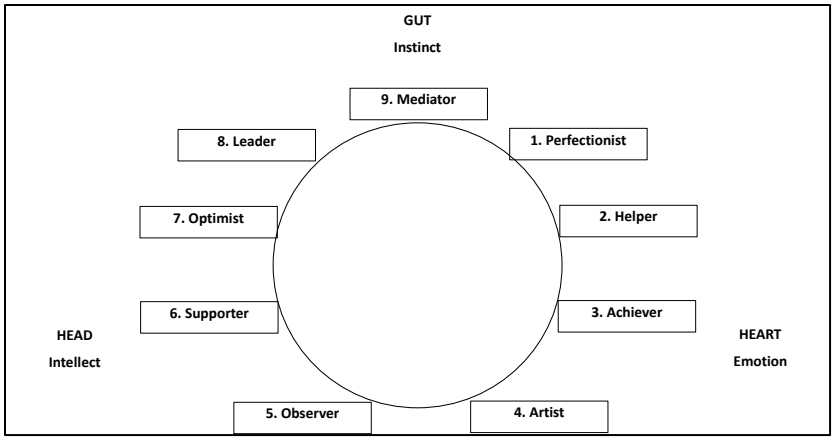

Figure 3 The Enneagram. Compulsive types, centers, and arrows

The Enneagram helps to know me, to know others, to learn about relationships.

It shows that the main personal behaviors, which usually seem to be one's strengths, such as perfectionism, sometimes are more a compulsion, a defense mechanism, that has a negative outcome.

It helps understand human behavior and understand that perfect people do not exist; people will always have lights and shadows, compulsions, and reactions.

Every personality has a shadow side: perfectionism brings resentment; helping others generates pride and a deaf claim for a return of the favors; high performance brings non-sanctum mechanisms for such high performance; artistry brings envy for having had a sadder life; wisdom brings greed for more knowledge and wisdom; alignment with external social and the business world brings the terror of rejection; optimism brings an excess of shallow external life; leading brings lust for power and control; mediating brings laziness.

The previous explanation provides a valuable perspective of human personalities' relational dimension, our controversial human nature. At the same time, it places spirituality in a central place of people's lives and healing processes.

Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson[22] stress the connection between the Enneagram recommendations and spiritual practices: how spiritual practices help people to be more mindful, more awake but may go in the opposite direction, or breeding illusions; spirituality can strengthen, but it may feed narcissism for being recognized; spirituality may cover the real problems, anxieties, and wounds. They also show how one's emotional healing journey requires some spiritual ingredients: seeking the truth, non-attachment, calming down, looking for other people's support, learning from everything, loving oneself and others, having spiritual practices. Every person needs to understand their psychology to make decisions, understanding how personal psychology may interfere with the decisions.

Spirituality is part of Bowen Family Systems Therapy, to heals the person and relationships

Bowen Family Systems Therapy shows how contemplation and spirituality help heal relationships to heal the individual.

Bowen's model introduces eight new concepts as part of emotional health based on relationships: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, emotional cutoff, sibling position, societal emotional process.

According to Nichols and Schwartz:

> The Differentiation of Self is the ability to separate feelings and thoughts. Undifferentiated people cannot separate feelings and thoughts; when asked to think, they are flooded with feelings, and have difficulty thinking logically and basing their responses on that. Further, they have difficulty separating their own from

[22] Riso, Don Richard and Russ Hudson. *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality*. Bantam. 1999. New York.

> other's feelings; they look to family to define how they think about issues, feel about people, and interpret their experiences. Differentiation is the process of freeing ourselves from our family's processes to define ourselves. This means being able to have different opinions and values than our family members, but being able to stay emotionally connected to them. It means being able to calmly reflect on a conflicted interaction afterward, realizing our own role in it, and then choosing a different response for the future.[23]

Interpersonal relationships are healthy and lead to happiness when members are differentiated. Differentiated people have low anxiety and develop good emotional, interpersonal connections because emotional attachment between persons is balanced.

Spirituality, meditation helps to build differentiation and a healthy connection with others.

David Schnarch[24], following Bowen's guidelines, shows how spirituality is central to rebuilding broken relationships. He presents cases of couples with difficulties. The therapy proposes that each member differentiates, matures, and heals by learning to value each other in the same terms expressed above: peace, mindfulness, values. The worst case is a couple that seems irrecoverable; Schnarch recommends "hugging until relax," an invitation to spirituality, meditation, silence, to have personal peace, and to perceive the value of the spouse.

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[23] Nichols, Michael P.; Schwartz, Richard C. *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods.* http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/counseling/bowen.html

[24] Schnarch PhD, David. *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships*. W. W. Norton & Company. 2009. New York.

In conclusion, Bowen Family System Therapy shows how spirituality heals the person and community; each person needs to perceive him or herself and others, valuing him or herself, and valuing others; spirituality plays a central role.

Spirituality is part of Gottman's therapy to heal relationships

John Gottman "conducted a study of couples in which he was able to predict which ones would eventually divorce with 93.6% accuracy."[25] Conducting interviews with couples, it is possible to:

> Identify four forms of negativity that he considered so devastating to a relationship that he referred to them as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, stonewalling.
>
> Dr. Gottman actually came up with his own approach based on sevenprinciples. These principles are mechanisms designed to make relationships work.[26]

Gottman proposes specific strategies to rebuild the couple:

- Building love maps to understand and value the partner.
- Express and nurture fondness and admiration to the partner.
- Turn toward one another, reflecting interest and respect.
- Accept influence, avoid power struggles.
- Manage conflict, overcome gridlock, emphasize the couple, soothe each other, accept each other's limitations.
- Create shared meaning, make life dreams come true

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[25] Klemz, Joseph. How Dr. Gottman Can PredictDivorce (with 94% Accuracy). Couples Issues. *Real Life Counseling.*

[26] Ibid.

- Cultivate trust and commitment.[27]

Gottman approach is consistent with the intuitions proposed by this book: building greatness by knowing each other, building transcendence, values, mutual appreciation and love, relationships, discernment, meanings, transformation, social action.

Spirituality is part of the Twelve Steps, to heal addictions

The Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step program is a holistic approach to recovery based on spiritual, emotional, and physical healing.

The Twelve-step Program[28] is a set of principles to help persons walk out of addictions such as drugs, excess alcohol, eating, sex,

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[27] The Gottman Institute. What is The Sound Relationship House? https://www.gottman.com/blog/what-is-the-sound-relationship-house/

[28] 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

work. They were developed in 1939 and reflected in the book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first steps lead to admitting that we are limited:

- Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- Step 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Loneliness triggers many emotional problems, depression, anxiety, addictions: meditation is an excellent cure for these problems.

The following steps admit the existence of greater power, God, and his role in our healing:

- Step 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- Step 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- Step 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- Step 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

The last two steps specifically address the need for prayer, meditation, and spirituality:

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11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

- Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- Step 12. The Twelve Steps stress that loneliness is probably the number one source of addictions. As discussed above, meditation helps to integrate the person internally, as well as connect to others.

The remaining steps continue what Waaijman mentions about human's re-creation as a result of their relationship with God:

- Step 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- Step 10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

There is a wealth of literature showing the strong connection between the Twelve Steps and spirituality: meditation, awareness of the personal addiction and the reasons that led to it, connection with the absolute and the need for help, connection with others to walk out of resentments and the isolation they produced, work in the elimination of the personal wrongs and healing of the damage produced.

Spirituality impacts on physical health

There is a positive interaction between spirituality and health.

William Yang et al.[29] describe how the confrontation with imminent death in patients with cancer can generate a process to cope with it. The spirituality of a person may suffer as the result of an existential crisis in which the meaning of their life is lost, and in some cases, their faith in God, however, recovered after a while. The existential crisis involves an "awareness of finitude, dissolving of the future, loss of meaning, severe emotional distress (fear, anxiety, panic, despair), loneliness, powerlessness, and identity crisis."

Yang et al. explain how coping mechanisms involve dealing with the body, its health, psychosomatic balance, build physical strength, but they put particular weight on the spiritual dimension. They present Waaijman's definition of spirituality, emphasizing the relational and transformational processes of spirituality. This transformation involves first a confrontation with reality, accepting reality leads to reframing their value system, to value the patient's self, the meaning of his or her life, his or her capacity to be loved by others, to value the fullness of life, and enter into a process of transformation:

> A genuinely physico-psycho-spiritual process is involved, one that is propelled by his sometimes daily changing physical condition. Therefore the patient's spiritual process is a highly dynamic one in which he is tossed between feeling up one day and down the next and, one may hope, eventually reaching a middle ground.
>
> This kind of 'spiritual' approach is far more challenging than using a belief in god as 'a tool in hand' to resolve problems of daily living. It is a continuous search for an attitude that might make accessible the ground between life and death, controlling and letting go, dependence and independence, self and other, and

[29] Yang. William, Ton Staps & Ellen Hijmans. "Going through a dark night. Existential Crisis in Cancer Patients - Effective Coping as a Psycho-spiritual Process embedded in the Vulnerability of the Body." *Studies in Spirituality*. 2012..

thus provide relief from the inner turmoil. Clearly, fixation on those polarities needs to be transcended if middle ground is to be found and cultivated.[30]

Scientific evidence. The positive emotional effects of spirituality: lower anxiety, addictions, diseases, better personal control

Catharine Paddock Ph.D.,[31] based on a new brain imaging study led by researchers at Yale University, states how people who regularly practice meditation can reduce daydreaming, anxiety, schizophrenia, quit smoking, cope with cancer, prevent psoriasis, reduce attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease, have a positive influence with autism.

Dr. Mercola at Natural Health Newsletter states that:

Meditation has been shown to alter the workings of our brain not only in the short-term, but quite possibly permanently. Meditating thickens the areas of our brain where memory and attention reside, according to a Harvard study, and although the aging process lightens the brain in certain sectors, 20 minutes of meditation a day slows that down a bit. Meditation can also improve our attention span, even while we are performing mundane tasks in the mid-afternoon, a time when people typically have problems concentrating. Interestingly enough, according to one study the benefits of meditation remained strong even after patients lost a night's sleep in follow-up research. Meanwhile, because meditation works so well to relieve stress, it can benefit all types of stress-related illnesses, and as we regular newsletter readers

[30] Yang. William; Staps, Ton & Ellen Hijmans. "Going through a dark night. Existential Crisis in Cancer Patients - Effective Coping as a Psychospiritual Process embedded in the Vulnerability of the Body." *Studies in Spirituality*. 2012. p. 336.

[31] https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/authors/catharine-paddock

know, just about every illness is stress-related. This may explain why meditation can help to relieve: high blood pressure, chronic pain, including headaches, respiratory problems such as emphysema and asthma, sleep disturbances and fatigue, gastrointestinal distress and irritable bowel syndrome, skin disorders, mild depression and premenstrual syndrome.[32]

Dr. Gene Bebeau, the president of the US branch of World Community of Christian Meditation[33], explains how meditation produces emotional benefits, as scientific research demonstrates:

- Ohio State University study examines office workers who spend 20 minutes daily in mindfulness meditation and yoga: After just six weeks participants are more aware of external stressors, less stressed by life events, and falling asleep more easily at night.
- UCLA study uses MRIs to scan brains of people who meditate. Regions in the brain linked to emotions are found to be larger in long-term meditators than in control group, giving meditators outstanding ability to regulate their emotions and allow for well-adjusted responses to whatever life throws their way.
- UCLA study focuses on children diagnosed with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who practice transcendental meditation twice daily in school. At the end of three months, reduced levels of stress, anxiety, and ADHD symptoms are reported among participants.
- A follow-up study of people with ADHD measures brain wave activity during problem-solving activities: Meditators

[32] https://www.wellnessresources.com/health-newsletter
[33] https://wccm.org

showed broader activation of the brain's prefrontal cortex, the seat of executive function, than non-meditators.

- Mindfulness meditation study tracks results in HIV-positive patients suffering stress: Mindfulness meditation stress-management training is shown to slow disease progression in HIV-positive adults.

Hilde Hustoft et al.[34] studied six patients with schizophrenia, concluding that spirituality provides more support and less of a burden in most cases.

Scientific evidence. The effects of religion on health: less disease, better behavior and lifestyle, general wellbeing, lower depression, better physical health

Bruce Y. Lee and Andrew B. Newberg[35] discuss the relationship between religion and health, showing that:

- Disease Incidence and Prevalence.

    - Religious involvement correlates with decreased morbidity and mortality.
    - High levels of religious involvement may be associated with up to seven years of longer life expectancy.
    - Those who regularly attended church had a lower prevalence of cirrhosis, emphysema, suicide, and death from ischemic heart disease.

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[34] Hustoft, Hilde; Hestad, Knut A.; Lien, Lars; Moller, Paul; Danbolt, Lars Johan. "If I Didn't Have My Faith I Would Have Killed Myself!" Spiritual Coping in Patients Suffering From Schizophrenia. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion.* Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. 2013.

[35] Lee, Bruce Y.; Newberg, Andrew B. "Religion and health: a review and critical analysis." *Zygon*, vol. 40, no. 2 (June 2005). ISSN 0591-2385.

- Religious participation and higher religiosity may have a beneficial effect on blood pressure.

- Disease and surgical outcomes.

  - Religiousness may correlate with better outcomes after significant illnesses and medical procedures.
  - Patients following elective open-heart surgery, lack of participation in social or community groups, and absence of strength and comfort from religion were consistent predictors of mortality.
  - In older women after a hip repair, religious belief was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms and better ambulation status.
  - In patients who underwent heart surgery, stronger religious beliefs were associated with shorter hospital stays and fewer complications, but attendance at religious services predicted more extended hospitalizations.
  - In women with breast cancer, patients who did not belong to religion tended not to survive as long.

- Behavior and lifestyles. Lifestyle differences may account for some of the observed effects.

  - Secular residents had diets higher in total fat and saturated fatty acids and higher plasma levels of cholesterol, triglyceride, and low-density lipoprotein than religious subjects.
  - College students revealed an inverse correlation between religiosity and behaviors that adversely affect health.

- Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists have been found to have a lower incidence of and mortality rates from cancers linked to tobacco and alcohol use.
- Religious individuals may be less likely to use alcohol and other substances.
- Even among those who use alcohol and drugs, religiously involved individuals are more likely to use them moderately, not heavily.
- In adolescents, personal devotion (a personal relationship with the divine) and affiliation with fundamentalist denominations were inversely associated with alcohol and illicit drug use.
- Spirituality permeates many established programs such as alcoholics anonymous.
- A significant number of recovering intravenous drug abusers use religious healing, relaxation techniques, and meditation.
- Religion may play a role in preventing risky sexual behavior. In adolescent females, religiosity correlated with more frank discussions about the risks of sexual activity, avoidance of unsafe sexual situations, positive associations between personal devotion, and fewer sexual partners outside a romantic relationship.
- Religion and spirituality can promote exercise; persons who attended church weekly were more likely to exercise regularly.

- General well-being.

  - Religiosity positively associates with feelings of well-being.

- Religious service attendance was predictive of higher life satisfaction.
- Members of religious kibbutzim in Israel reported a higher sense of coherence and less hostility and were more likely to engage in volunteer work than nonmembers.
- Hope and optimism seemed to run higher among religious individuals than nonreligious ones in some study populations.

- Depression.

  - Religious activity to be associated with remission of depression.
  - Inverse correlation between religiosity and suicide.

- Coping with medical problems.

  - Religious belief may provide more significant meaning in people's lives and, in turn, help patients better cope with their diseases.
  - Many Hindus stress understanding and detachment from pain, many Muslims and Jews favor resisting or fighting pain, and many Christians stress seeking atonement and redemption.

According to Lee and Newberg, broad epidemiological studies that use crude outcome measures such as morbidity and mortality cannot establish causality but raise the possibility that something about religion is protective. Many of the study populations may have been too large to account for all possible co-founders. Religious participation may be associated with socioeconomic, lifestyle, ethnic,

and geographic factors that may affect health. Further epidemiological studies looking at different subgroups may help refine and define associations.

X.

SPIRITUALITY LEADS US TO SOCIAL ACTION, DRIVES SOCIAL CHANGE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the tenth dimension of greatness that spirituality builds in each person and community: its power to promote social action and drive social change. The social action that spirituality generates is an extraordinary source of happiness that leads toward world peace.

This chapter is important; our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change can be manifested in multiple ways: social innovation, social entrepreneurship, business for social impact, microfinance, sustainability, social policies, education for the underprivileged, social healthcare, stakeholder's social responsibility, corporate citizenship, three-domain corporate social performance, corporate social responsiveness, social venture capital, socially responsible investment, social work, community development, welfare for workers, non-profit organizations, philanthropy.

World peace results from our social action, connecting us with our souls and others' souls, alerting us to the need for compassion, valuing and serving the community, and involving us in modern life's complexities, promoting social action, a missionary lifestyle, going out to people in the margins.

Summary of the chapter

Any of us may experience how spirituality leads to social action by connecting us with our souls and others' souls, alerting us to the need for compassion.

There is a mutual need between spirituality and action.

Spirituality leads to social action: it fortifies, enlarges, and motivates us to do good works for others; meditation leads to an engaged spirituality of people sharing their being and nurturing their compassion and justice; silent prayer makes us alert to the need for compassionate and loving action in the pursuit of justice; recognizing Christ in each person is a driver of social action; social action not inspired by contemplation may be sterile and rigid.

Social action nurtures our spirituality, prayer, and liturgy; social action is a requirement of spirituality: contemplation without action is like a fantasy without substance; the active life is a preparation for the contemplative life.

For Thomas Merton, our inner self helps us perceive the world from a richer perspective, our inner spiritual life leads us to a fuller life, in which we value the human community, which completes us, helps us develop love, "brothers in Christ": inner spiritual life leads to serving the community, the presence of God leads to the love of neighbor; our fellow human beings are valued by God and thus deserving of care and justice.

Discernment promotes social action and a missionary lifestyle. The Jesuits' mission of the "greater glory of God," frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends but new challenges. The Jesuits' orientation toward the needs of the poor, the promotion of justice, our faith must show up on the streets. Bergoglio's discernment as an engine of social action: faithful to Christ, faithful to the Church, going out to people in the margins, with mud in our boots.

In modernity, there is an effort to reunite mystical and dogmatic theology, morality and spirituality, contemplation and action; spiritual experiences must be involved in the complexities of modern life, such as suffering, work, justice, liberation, change, sexuality, and anger.

Social spirituality, also called lay spirituality, leads us to be in touch with a person's soul encountered and cultivated in the social

fields of education, care, work, and wellbeing: availability, personal relationship, empathy, mutual vulnerability, and personal dedication.

The mutual need between contemplation and action

Patricia Lefevere explains Thomas Keating view of how spirituality is a prerequisite of social action:

> So much social action is not going anywhere unless it is rooted in prayer. Our peace motives are admirable, but we're naive if we think we can fix things, that we can start a revolution without first achieving a contemplative state of mind. [1]

Don Edwards[2] provides a rich analysis of the connection between contemplation and action. According to Edwards, several views propose a mutual need between contemplation and action:

- Colossians 4:11. These alone are my co-workers for the kingdom of God.
- 1 Corinthians 3:9. We are God's co-workers.
- Maximus, the Confessor: contemplation without action is like fantasy without real substance, while action not inspired by contemplation is sterile and rigid.
- Saint Augustine: no one ought to be so leisured as to take no thought in that leisure for the interest of his neighbor, nor so active as to feel no need for the contemplation of God.
- Gregory the Great: the contemplative life required a complete focus on the love of God and neighbor.

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[1] Lefevere, Patricia. "Berrigan, Keating know way to peace. Alike yet different the two believe prayer is the key." *National Catholic Reporter*. December 16, 2005.

[2] Edwards, Don. "Practical Mysticism. Seeking to Unite Contemplation and Action." *Pacifica* 15. June 2002.

- John Cassian: the active life was a preparation for the contemplative life.
- Teresa of Avila: during quiet prayer, the will is united with its God and leaves the other faculties free to be occupied in what is for God's service.

The scriptures promote a balance between spirituality and social action, stressing the need for social action

Susan R. Holman et al.[3] explain "De Beneficentia: A Homily on Social Action attributed to Basil of Caesarea," which provides valuable insights. Based on Jesus' response to the young rich man:

> Matthew 19:21. Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me.
>
> Mark 10:21. And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him: One thing is wanting unto thee: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.
>
> Luke 18:22. Which when Jesus had heard, he said to him: Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

[3] Holman, Susan R.; Macé, Caroline; Matz. Brian J. "De Beneficentia: A Homily on Social Action attributed to Basil of Caesarea." *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 457-481. © Konitiklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2012. DOI: 10.1163/157007212X627875

Meredith Secomb[4] discusses how the following passages of the Bible propose the need for social action as part of a spiritual journey:

> Micah 6:8. I will shew thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Verily, to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God.
>
> Matthew 25:34-36. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.
>
> Mark 12:30-31. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these.
>
> Mark 12:32-34. And the scribe said to him: Well, Master, thou hast said in truth, that there is one God, and there is no other besides him. And that he should be loved with the whole heart, and with the whole understanding, and with the whole soul, and with the whole strength; and to love one's neighbour as one's self, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices. And Jesus seeing that he had answered wisely, said to him: Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

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[4] Secomb, Meredith. "The ordinary' contemplative life and the little way' of social justice. The Spirit in Contemporary Culture." *The Way*, 55/1 (January 2016), 99-109.

Peter C. Erb[5] discusses how Martha and Mary's episode reflects the balance between the love of the neighbor and the love of God in our lives. The following discussion relies on Erb's views.

> Luke 10:25-28 presents the need to love God and neighbor: in the dialogue between Jesus and the scholar of the law, in which Jesus concludes: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." It continues with the two poles.
>
> Luke 10:29-37 presents the need to love the neighbor; Jesus presents the parable of the good Samaritan, which concludes: "Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?' He answered, 'The one who treated him with mercy. Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"
>
> Luke 10: 38-42 presents the need to embrace a contemplative life, in the Martha and Mary story in which Jesus concludes: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."
>
> Luke 11: 1-4, the Lord's Prayer.

Medieval Christianity promoted social action as a requirement of spirituality

According to Susan Holman et al., Saint Basil the Great promoted the need for social justice:

> To his perfect followers, [the Lord] enjoined the entire and complete fulfillment of mercy, so that having finished their service to

[5] Erb, Peter C. *Contemplation and Action in the Modern World.*

> others by means of possessions, they might embark upon service by means of word and spirit. To the rest, he ordained allotment and sharing of what they have, so that in this way they might be seen as imitators of the kindness of God, showing mercy and giving and sharing.[6]

According to Holman, Gregory of Nazianzus also emphasized that "being wealthy without helping the poor is not a viable Christian option":

> No; either we must set everything aside unto Christ that we may become his true followers, taking up the cross, and, unencumbered by anything that would drag us down, buoyantly soar to the world on high and gain Christ at the cost of everything else, ennobled through our humility and through our poverty enriched, or we must share what we have with Christ so that owning possessions may somehow be sanctified in itself by our putting them to good use and sharing them with those who have none.[7]

As Peter Erb[8] explains, Augustine insisted that action and contemplation must not be separated; Gregory Nazianzus considered that a sublime contemplation and humbler action are necessary, action is a contemplation path; Gregory the Great explained how Jesus made miracles and prayed on the mount; the contemplative should not neglect the active life; for Bernard, faith comes before works; faith without works is dead and, so too is contemplation.

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[6] Holman, Susan R.; Macé, Caroline; Matz. Brian J. "De Beneficentia: A Homily on Social Action attributed to Basil of Caesarea." *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 457-481. © Konitiklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2012. DOI: 10.1163/157007212X627875. p. 474

[7] Ibid. p. 474

[8] Erb, Peter C. *Contemplation and Action in the Modern World.*

According to Erb:

> The contemplative life retains its primacy but cannot be separated from the active life, and in neither case is the contemplative life established against or above the active life either in a social (a lesser lay opposed to a more perfect monastic state) or in a temporal division (the love of God as a final point toward which one strives in this life, leaving all other points behind).[9]

However, as Don Edwards[10] states, not everyone was so positive about the interaction between both: the fourteenth-century English writer Richard Roller considered that it was impossible to live both contemplation and action at the same time; Saint Bernard also struggled to try to live both lives simultaneously; Thomas Merton also complained about the difficulties to live contemplation and action.

McGinn[11] states that the Rule of Saint Francis fosters all members of the order to be servants, to have the Spirit of the Lord.

Godfrey O'Donnell[12] presents the need for social action in Ignatian spirituality:

> Ignatius's genius was' to have transposed the best of medieval teaching and terminology on contemplation and to have re-presented it for those whose calling within the Church was to an active apostolic life. The context of contemplation was no longer

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[9] Ibid. p. 8.

[10] Edwards, Don. Practical Mysticism. Seeking to Unite Contemplation and Action. *Pacifica* 15. June 2002.

[11] McGinn, Bernard. *The Flowering of Mysticism. Men and women in the new mysticism. 1200 - 1350*. The Crossroad publishing company. 1998. New York. p. 71

[12] O'Donnell, Godfrey. Contemplation. American Theological Library Association.

the monastery; it was rather the decisions and actions of companions of Christ sent to serve their fellow-men.[13]

Protestant spirituality, the role of action

For Peter Erb,[14] Calvin considered that perfect contemplative life is not better than an active life. Luther opposed the conception that mysticism is above the love of the divine in the neighbor. For Protestants, the traditional purgation, illumination, and union is reframed as: faith reflects union, the practice of virtue, and the purgation of sin. When

Fritz de Wet[15] discusses how Luther and Calvin viewed contemplation as a connection with the Word of God, as a member of the community; the life of God breaks into our reality, opening a new life for us, a new dawn, a new glory; the presence of the Lord provides a quiet space that enlightens our lives, provides us the energy to engage with the world, promoting social action.

Modernity: spirituality from below, involved in the complexities of life, suffering, work, justice, liberation, change, sexuality, anger

Waaijman[16] explains that the systematizations of spirituality shifted, first by mystical theology, which focused on the three ways: purification, enlightenment, and the way of union. The end of the Middle Ages turned to ascetical theology, which focuses on perfec-

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Erb, Peter C. *Contemplation and Action in the Modern World.*

[15] de Wet, Fritz. "Meditation as practical theological instrument in connecting Christian spirituality with social justice in the space of service delivery." *Scriptura* 112 (2013:1), pp. 1-17 http://scriptura.joumals.ac.za

[16] Waaijman, Kees. "Spirituality as theology." *Studies in spirituality.* Peeters. 2011. Leuven. Belgium. p. 188.

tion, self-sanctification. The end of the XIX century introduced reorientation to principles focused on dogma, the laws, and radical rationality.

According to Waaijman, the two World Wars demolished such perfectionism, which was replaced by the personal spiritual experience, existentialism, spirituality from below, involved in the complexities of modern life: suffering, work, justice, liberation, change, sexuality, anger, and violence.

Don Edwards[17] concludes that in modernity, there is an effort to reunite mystical and dogmatic theology, morality and spirituality, contemplation and action, as Thomas Merton summarizes:

> Dogmatic and mystical theology, or theology and "spirituality" are not to be set apart in mutually exclusive categories, as if mysticism were for saintly women and theological study were for practical but, alas, unsaintly men. This fallacious division perhaps explains much that is actually lacking both in theology and in spirituality. But the two belong together, just as body and soul belong together. Unless they are united, there is no fervour, no life and no spiritual value in theology, no substance, no meaning and no sure orientation in the contemplative life.[18]

Spirituality impacts everyone's daily work decisions.

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[17] Edwards, Don. Practical Mysticism. Seeking to Unite Contemplation and Action. *Pacifica* 15. June 2002.

[18] Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (2nd ed.; Wheathampstead: Clarke, 1972) 197-8. As quoted by Edwards, Don. Practical Mysticism. Seeking to Unite Contemplation and Action. *Pacifica* 15. June 2002. p. 188.

Silent prayer makes us alert to the need for social action

Meredith Secomb[19] presents different views on the connection between spirituality and social action.

> Eggemeier, Coakley, Weil and Moore are just some of the many voices that point to the benefits of silent prayer for making us alert to the need for compassionate and loving action in the pursuit of justice.
>
> Eggemeier argues that an ascetic practice of contemplative prayer is required to open the eyes of the heart and to develop the accompanying embodied sensitivities to the needs of others.
>
> Coakley has written powerfully about the transformative effects of a discipline of contemplative prayer and its capacity to generate a prophetic dynamic of compassionate action. Her work with prisoners, for example, revealed that regular periods of silence can transform their experience of self as well as providing a healing, alternative 'space' to the oppressive regime around them.
>
> Simone Weil observes that a contemplative discipline was very necessary for the focused attention which enabled the Good Samaritan to perceive the plight of the man by the road. Moore insists, 'Prayer is the most radical therapy for our culture'.[20]

[19] Secomb, Meredith. "'The ordinary' contemplative life and the little way' of social justice. The Spirit in Contemporary Culture." *The Way, 55/1* (January 2016), 99-109.

[20] Ibid. pp. 107-108

The deep connection between an engaged spirituality and social action

Susan Rakoczy[21] defends the deep connection between spirituality and social action. She presents the cases of Teresa of Avila, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton.

Rakoczy explains how Teresa of Avila view the case of Marta and Mary as the need for spirituality to engage in social action; spirituality fortifies, enlarges, and makes the soul possible to do good works for others: "This is the reason for prayer, my daughters, the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works."

Rakoczy explains how Dorothy Day recognized the person of Christ in each person, and this was the driver of social action: feeding the hungry, sheltering poor, as Matthew 25 described: spirituality and social action are not separated issues.

Janet W. Parachin[22] proposes an "engaged spirituality," which involves nurturing the spirit by connecting to spiritual sources such as prayer, contemplation, community, liturgy while engaging in social action. Parachin supports her views on the example of Dorothy Day and Thich Nhat Hanh.

As Parachin explains, Day was a convert to Catholicism with a strong socialist background. Her spirituality involved prayer, work, social and political activity. Her contemplative lifestyle provided her an engaged spirituality with the purpose of social action; she viewed her communion as nurturing with Christ's body while joining the mystical body of the Church, of all believers, the drive to reconstruct society.

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[21] Rakoczy, Susan. What does mysticism have to do with social justice? Scriptura 112 (2013:1), pp. 1-16 http://scriptura.joumals.ac.za

[22] Parachin, Janet W. *Educating for an Engaged Spirituality: Dorothy Day and Thich Nhat Hanh as Spiritual Exemplars*. Phillips Theological Seminary. Religious Education. Vol. 95 No. 3 Summer 2000.

As Parachin explains, Thich Nhat Hanh was a Zen Buddhist monk. His meditation led him to an engaged spirituality of people sharing their being and nurturing their compassion and justice. Meditation causes a personal involvement in the alleviation of the suffering of others.

Thomas Merton, inner spiritual life leads to serving the community

Susan Rakoczy[23] explains how Thomas Merton viewed spirituality as a way to contact a person's true self, "to be a saint means to be me," which leads to connecting with the world's neighbors: spirituality leads to connect to others. We must see every person as Christ: "we have the obligation to treat every other man as Christ Himself, respecting his life as if it were the life of Christ, his rights as if they were the rights of Christ."

For Thomas Merton[24], the interior self's discovery does not mean isolation, withdrawal, introversion, emptiness, or unconsciousness; this would be a failure of our spiritual life. Our inner self helps us perceive the world from a richest perspective, in which we value the human community, which completes us, helps us develop love, "brothers in Christ." But we need that distance to build our spiritual freedom, putting us to the community's service. And this is valid to all humankind, not just contemplative monks: we need the desert to see the face of God, to fight with our demons, to be free from our attachments:

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[23] Rakoczy, Susan. "What does mysticism have to do with social justice?" *Scriptura* 112 (2013:1), pp. 1-16 http://scriptura.journals.ac.za

[24] Merton, Thomas. *Society and the Inner Self (II).* Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust.

> The important thing in contemplation is not gratification and rest but awareness, life, creativity and freedom. In fact, contemplation is man's highest and most essential spiritual activity. It is his most creative and dynamic affirmation of his divine sonship. It is not just the sleepy, suave, restful embrace of "being" in a dark, generalized contentment: it is a flash of the lightning of divinity piercing the darkness of nothingness and sin. Not something general and abstract, but something on the contrary as concrete, particular and "existential" as it can possibly be.[25]

As Merton expresses, our inner spiritual life leads us to a fuller life:

> Overflowing fulness of new life, of charity, divine love, and a spiritual comprehension of the mystery of God's life within us in all its dimensions, through the experience of Christ's love for us "which surpasses all understanding," a deep participation in the life of the Trinity. This is a most important discovery in the interior life. Thus the man with the "sacred" view is never afraid or ashamed to remain with his own loneliness, for in it he is at peace, and through it he can come to the presence of God.[26]
>
> In active contemplation, a man becomes able to live within himself. He learns to be at home with his own thoughts. He becomes to a greater and greater degree independent of exterior supports. His mind is pacified not by passive dependence on things outside himself —diversions, entertainments, conversations, business— but by its own constructive activity. He derives inner satisfaction from spiritual creativeness. He derives strength

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[25] Ibid. p. 134.

[26] Merton, Thomas. *The Inner Experience: Christian Contemplation (III).* Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust. p. 207.

> not from what he gets out of things and people, but from giving himself to life and to others.[27]

As Ross Labrie[28] describes, for Merton, the presence of God leads to the love of neighbor; our fellow human beings are valued by God and thus deserving of care and justice. For Merton, the Berrigan brothers are an example of social activism driven by spirituality:

> Before becoming involved in a particular protest action, the Berrigans would gather in prayer and meditation to weigh the value of the civil dissent they were on the verge of expressing. Increasingly in the 1960s Merton came to believe that religious contemplation existed not only for the good of the individual but also for the good of the community.[29]

Social and lay spirituality in the social fields of education, care, work, and wellbeing

Frans Maas and Kees Waaijman[30] refer to "social spirituality," also called "lay spirituality," as the "spirituality that is encountered and cultivated in the social fields of education, care, work, and well-being":

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[27] Merton, Thomas. *The Inner Experience: Kinds of Contemplation (IV)*. Selected and Edited by Patrick Hart. Copyright © 1983 by Trustees of Merton Legacy Trust. p. 290.

[28] Labrie, Ross. "Contemplation and Action in Thomas Merton." *Christianity and Literature* Vol 55, No. 4 (Summer 2006)

[29] Ibid. p. 481.

[30] Maas, Frans; Waaijman, Kees. "Social spirituality and the quest for soul." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Netherlands. 2016.

> People can throw themselves into their work heart and soul; machines cannot. One can touch a person's soul, but not a machine.[31]

Spirituality in the workplace, as Maas and Waaijman explain, the world has become more competitive and unpredictable. Organizations defend human values, employees are turning toward more profound spirituality.

Regarding spirituality in education, as Maas and Waaijman explain, spirituality is becoming more important as a counterweight to rationalism, technocracy, market orientation, and consumerism. Spirituality helps to integrate all socio-economic sciences, all human dimensions and humanize them. Spirituality helps us find our authentic self.

Spirituality functions as the antidote to the materialistic evolution of modern Western culture. However, when spirituality is separated from religion, it risks losing its cohesive framework, becoming too blurred, referring to a vague, amorphous larger whole. It may have virtually no effect on real life. Spirituality may end up in a downward spiral of individualist fragmentation.

Without any link to religion, many would try to limit the disorientation and individualistic fragmentation by proposing a human values menu: valuing oneself, others, the society, and the environment. However, values alone may not inspire or generate real corporate social responsibility or commitment.

Regarding spirituality in the care profession, Maas and Waaijman explain how spirituality is a central piece of care: the personal presence of the caregiver, availability, personal relationship, empathy, mutual vulnerability, personal dedication, trying to find a meaning for the suffering, the dignity of the patient. However, what are the

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[31] Ibid.

source of the caregiver's humanism, source of inspiration, and motivation? A personal relationship with God may inspire such humaneness to receive God's infinite compassion and mercy.

Ignatian spirituality. Discernment promotes social action, a missionary lifestyle

Ignatius Spiritual Exercises provide valuable insights on how discernment promotes social action.

- Week 1. Reflections of God's love in our lives help us develop a spiritual sense, which leads to discovering God as a source of life and happiness.
- Week 2. To learn how to follow Christ, introducing discernment leads to a profound personal and social transformation. Knowing and loving Jesus leads us to follow him, become part of his mission.
  What is Jesus' mission? "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God; To comfort all who mourn" (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18).
- Week 3. To participate in his passion and death, share his mission through personal purification, becoming free from all attachments.
- Week 4. To meditate on his resurrection, through "The contemplation to reach love," we get introduced into the most extraordinary reality, his love, his Trinitarian life, sharing his mission to bring love to all, the engine of leadership and social transformation.

This is a crucial part of this book: discernment involves the dimensions of greatness described in this book. For Christians, discernment is fundamentally Christological, centered in Christ, in his mission.

Herbert Alphonso[32] explains how the EE help define personal vocation, the community's role. During the EE, we wake up to the reality that our personal call has been present in our history since the beginning. A call reflects the will of God in our lives, the primacy of love and charity that the Spirit writes in everyone's hearts, which becomes the backbone of future decisions, of everyone's identity.

Howard J. Gray[33] explains how the EE provide critical insights for the modern social reality: how contemporary social issues such as ecological, emigration, hunger, urban violence, ethnic hatred can be healed by humanity immersed in the Bible, with a profound relationship with God, that leads to personal and community transformation, solidarity.

Albert Vanhoye[34] explains how the EE help to build the civilization of love. For Vanhoye, the second-week knowledge of the interiority of Jesus, to know his heart, his feelings, his suffering, what he has loved, leads to a more authentic relationship with him, to love him more deeply, and to make our election to share his mission, to build a civilization based on love.

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[32] Alphonso, Herbert. "La vocación personal. La transformación en profundidad por medio de los Ejercicios Espirituales." *Psicología y Ejercicios Ignacianos*. Editado por Carlos Alemany, José Antonio García-Monge. Editorial Sal Terrae. 1997. Spain.

[33] Gray, Howard J. "Los Ejercicios Espirituales en un mundo secular." *Ejercicios Espirituales y mundo de hoy. Congreso internacional de Ejercicios*. Editorial Sal Terrae. Loyola. 1991. Spain.

[34] Vanhoye, Albert. "Ejercicios Espirituales para la civilización del amor." Ejercicios Espirituales y mundo de hoy. Congreso internacional de Ejercicios. Editorial Sal Terrae. Loyola. 1991. Spain.

The Jesuits' mission of the "greater glory of God": rediscover, redefine, reach out, beyond frontiers, boundaries, new challenges, new opportunities

Robert Klair Kaiser explains[35] how the Jesuits have a mission toward "the greater glory," as Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit's general who survived the horror of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, stated:

> Jesuits are never content with the status quo, the known, the tried, the already existing. We are constantly driven to rediscover, to redefine, and reach out for the magis [the most]. For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed. Indeed, ours is a holy boldness, a certain apostolic aggressivity, typical of our way to proceeding.[36]

Kaiser presents a long list of Jesuits which reflect several aspects of what he calls "the Jesuit DNA":

- Benedetto de Goes, a Portuguese Jesuit, who went through a challenging mission toward China, four years crossing the Himalayas, pushing the frontiers, showing the Jesuit attitude: "no monastery walls to hold them in, no attachments, free to innovate, remain flexible, adapt constantly, set ambitious

[35] Kaiser, Robert Klair. *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world.* Rowan and Littlefield. 2014. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London.

[36] Arrupe, S.J., Pedro. "Presentation to Jesuit delegates to the Order's thirty second General Congregation, 1974." As quoted at: *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world.* Robert Klair Kaiser. Rowan and Littlefield. 2014. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. p. 136.

goals, think globally, move quickly, take risks, make mistakes."[37]

- Matteo Ricci, S.J., was one of the first missionaries into China, the first European to enter the Forbidden City of Beijing, promoting Christianity, converting people, teaching European culture and sciences to the Chinese.
- Paolo Dall'Oglio, S.J., fostered inter-religious dialogue, working with the "others" to make a better world; he became a "Jesuit Muslim" "because Jesus loves Muslims." Dall'Oglio learned to love Islam; he considered himself a "syncretist, without losing my faithfulness to the mystery of the Church of Jesus Christ."
- Aloysius Pieris, S.J., worked in the dialogue Buddhism-Christianity: "In understanding Buddha we become better Christians, and in understanding Jesus, they become better Buddhist."
- Pedro Arrupe, S.J., Pope Francis mentor, placed social justice and peace at the heart of the Jesuit's mission. Arrupe, a Jesuit missionary in Japan, was arrested in December 1941 by the Japanese security forces after the Pearl Harbor bombing. After a month in which he believed he was going to be executed, he was released. In 1945 he was in Hiroshima while the atomic bomb exploded, so he experienced its horror and provided medical assistance to the bomb's wounded. He served as the Superior of the Jesuits' Japanese Province until he was elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus in 1965.[38]

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[37] Kaiser, Robert Klair. *Inside the Jesuits*. pp. 28-29.
[38] Ibid. pp 87-92.

The Jesuits orientation toward the needs of the poor, the promotion of justice

Robert Klair Kaiser explains,[39] for Jesuits faith must show up on the streets, in communities as well as in the halls of power, to change the world, promote economic dignity, health care, voting rights/democracy, accompany, serve, and advocate the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, eliminate gun violence, immigrant justice, mass incarceration.

Arrupe led the Jesuits after Vatican II, and he focused on addressing the needs of the poor, the promotion of justice:

> The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are essentially a method enabling us to make very concrete decisions in accordance with God's will. It is a method that does not limit us to any particular option, but spreads out before us the whole range of practicable options in any given situation; opens up for us a sweeping vision embracing many possibilities, to the end that God himself, in all his tremendous originality, may trace out our path for us.
>
> What kind of man or woman is needed today by the Church, by the world? One who is a "man-or woman-for-others." That is my shorthand description. A man-or-woman-for-others. But does this not contradict the very nature of the human person? Are we not each a "being-for-ourselves?" Gifted with intelligence that endows us with power, do we not tend to control the world, making ourselves its center? Is this not our vocation, our history?
>
> Yes; gifted with conscience, intelligence and power each of us is indeed a center. But a center called to go out of ourselves, to give ourself to others in love — love, which is our definitive

[39] Kaiser, Robert Klair. *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world.* Rowan and Littlefield. 2014. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London.

and all-embracing dimension, that which gives meaning to all our other dimensions. Only the one who loves fully realizes himself or herself as a person. To the extent that any of us shuts ourselves off from others we do not become more a person; we becomes less.

Anyone who lives only for his or her own interests not only provides nothing for others. He or she does worse. They tend to accumulate in exclusive fashion more and more knowledge, more and more power, more and more wealth; thus denying, inevitably to those weaker then themselves their proper share of the God-given means for human development.

What is it to humanize the world if not to put it at the service of mankind? But the egoist not only does not humanize the material creation, he or she dehumanizes others themselves. They change others into things by dominating them, exploiting them, and taking to themselves the fruit of their labor.

The tragedy of it all is that by doing this, the egoists dehumanize themselves. They surrender themselves with the possessions they covet; they become slaves – no longer persons who are self-possessed but un-persons, things driven by their blind desires and their objects.

But when we dehumanize, de-personalize ourselves in this way, something stirs within us. We feel frustrated. In our heart of hearts we know that what we have is nothing compared with what we are, what we can be, what we would like to be. We would like to be ourselves. But we dare not break the vicious circle. We think we can overcome our frustrations by striving to have more, to have more than others, to have ever more and more. We thus turn our lives into a competitive rat-race without meaning.

The downward spiral of ambition, competition, and self-destruction twists and expands unceasingly, with the result that we are chained ever more securely to a progressive, and progressively frustrating, dehumanization.

> Dehumanization of ourselves and dehumanization of others. For by thus making egoism a way of life, we translate it, we objectify it, in social structures. Starting from our person sins of egoism, we become exploiters of others, dehumanizing them and ourselves in the process, and hardening the process into a structure of society which may rightfully be called sin objectified. For it becomes hardened in ideas, institutions, impersonal and depersonalized organisms which now escape our direct control, a tyrannical power of destruction and self-destruction.
>
> How escape from this vicious circle? Clearly, the whole process has its root in egoism – in the denial of love. But to try to live in love and justice in a world whose prevailing climate is egoism and injustice, where egoism and injustice are built into the very structures of society – is this not a suicidal, or at least a fruitless undertaking?[40]

Among the many social initiatives promoted by Arrupe, the following two are excellent examples of the Jesuit spirit.

As Robert Klair Kaiser explains, in 1967, a year after being elected, launched PICO, the Pacific Institute for Community Organization, with the following goals:

> Faith in Action (previously known as PICO) believes that Faith must show up on the streets, in communities as well as in the halls of power. Just as those who fought for racial and economic justice before us, our Faith reminds us of what is truly important. At Faith in Action, we work to change the world in the following

[40] Arrupe, S.J., Pedro. *Men and women for others.* Address delivered to a group of Jesuit high school alumni by Arrupe, Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Valencia, Spain. 1973. https://ignatiansolidarity.net/men-and-women-for-others-fr-pedro-arrupe-s-j/

> issues: economic dignity, health care, gun violence, immigrant justice, mass incarceration, voting rights/democracy.[41]

As Robert Klair Kaiser explains,[42] "today PICO has more than a thousand member institutions (including thirty-seven different faith traditions) representing 1.2 million families in 250 cities and 18 states."

Thomas Massaro, S.J.,[43] explains how Arrupe launched the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in 1970.

> This agency, sponsored by the Society of Jesus, serving and employing people from all faiths and walks of life, coordinates an impressive worldwide response to the refugee crisis of our era.
>
> JRS seeks to accompany, serve, and advocate the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, that they may heal, learn and determine their own future. Our impact: 640,000 people served, 184,403 children in JRS education, $55 million invested world-wide, 150 current projects, we work in over 50 Countries.[44]

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[41] *Faith in Action*. About us. https://faithinaction.org/our-work/issue-areas/

[42] Kaiser, Robert Klair. *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world.* Rowan and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2014.

[43] Massaro, S.J., Thomas. *Mercy in action. The social teachings of Pope Francis.* Rowman and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2017. p. 2.

[44] *Jesuit Refugee Service* https://jrs.net/

Jorge Bergoglio: discernment as an engine of social action, faithful to Christ, faithful to the Church, going out to people in the margins, with mud in our boots

In 1973, Arrupe appointed Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., as provincial of Argentina. In 1974, Arrupe also asked Bergoglio to intercede to avoid a secession of a group of dissenters within the Society of Jesus. Austen Ivereigh explains the profound influence of Arrupe on Bergoglio:

> Arrupe held Bergoglio in high esteem, he trusted him […] Arrupe was something of a model for Francis," as both shared the concern for the poor, and both believed that modernity required a solution based on spirituality: "Not to reject modernity, but to discern what was good, what was threatening to the Gospel, and what wasn't. I think that was Arrupe's big thing, rather than being in this constant confrontation with the modern world, to have a dialogue with it.[45]

As Robert Klair Kaiser explains[46], Bergoglio embodies a Jesuit DNA:

> Faithful to Christ, faithful to the Church, going out to people in the margins […] with mud in his boots.[47] God has redeemed us, all of us, with the blood of Christ: all of us, not just the Catholics.

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45 Ivereigh, Austen. *The Great Reformer. Francis and the making of a radical pope*. Henry Holt and Company. New York. 2014.

46 Kaiser, Robert Klair. *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world*. Rowan and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2014.

47 Pell, George. "Interview La Stampa." As quoted by Robert Klair Kaiser, *Inside the Jesuits*. Rowan and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2014.

> Everyone! Even the atheists. […] An innate capacity for virtue comes from God that it lives in the depths of every heart.[48]

Thomas Massaro, S.J.,[49] explains Bergoglio's Jesuit DNA, evidenced by his spiritual orientation, the simplicity, and frugality of his life, his orientation to leadership "for the greater glory of God," his going to the margins, to the poor and destitute, social justice, the profound Jesuit spiritual discernment connecting a life of prayer with a life of action, his transformational attitude, his view of encounter shown in inter-religious dialogue and trying to facilitate the connection between Cuba and the USA, promoting peace in Syria.

Many of his international trips were made to places in conflict or with serious social or political issues or religious division, such as Brazil, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay, Cuba and United States, Kenya, Uganda, and the Central African Republic, Cuba and Mexico, Armenia, Poland, Georgia and Azerbaijan, Sweden, Egypt, Portugal, Colombia, Myanmar and Bangladesh, Chile and Peru, Switzerland, Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Panama, United Arab Emirates.

Massaro shows how the first initiatives of Pope Francis were focused on social justice: he went to Lampedusa,

> "A stopover point for desperate refugees fleeing to Europe from Africa;" at the Rio de Janeiro World Youth Day, he "inspired young people to renew their faith and take up the duty of service

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[48] Pope Francis. "Homily May 22 2013." As quoted by Robert Klair Kaiser, *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world.* Rowan and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2014. pp. 5-6.

[49] Massaro, S.J., Thomas. *Mercy in action. The social teachings of Pope Francis.* Rowman and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2017. p. 2.

> to humankind, incorporating conscious and sacrificial efforts to pursue social justice into their way of life."[50]

Robert Klair Kaiser explains how his name, Francis, "implies a whole new spirituality, a whole program of the new pope." Francis presents a message of mercy, not a message focused on our sins:

> When in his first Sunday audience in Saint Peter's Square recalled Jesus 'striking attitude' toward the woman taken in adultery as recorded in John 8:1-11: "We do not hear words of scorn, we do not hear words of condemnation, but only words of love, of mercy, that invite us to conversion. […] This word mercy changes everything. It is the best word we can hear: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just."[51]

As Keiser explains, Francis proposes to create a culture of encounter, "proclaiming the Gospel message to different cultures […] an encounter between faith, reason […] in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important for our discernment."[52]

Francis believes in an inclusive Church, of the people on a journey, together:

> It is the experience of the Church as the people of God, pastors and people together The Church is the totality of God's people, this daily sanctity. There is a holy middle class, which we can all be part of […] holiness in the patience of the people of God: a

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[50] Massaro, S.J., Thomas. *Mercy in action. The social teachings of Pope Francis.* Rowman and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2017. p. 2.

[51] Kaiser, Robert Klair. *Inside the Jesuits. How Pope Francis is changing the Church and the world.* Rowman and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2014. p. 4.

[52] Ibid. pp. 12-13.

> woman who is raising children, a man who works to bring home the bread, the sick, the elderly priests […] I often associate sanctity with patience {…} a constancy in going forward, day by day […] like a prayer […] The Church is like a home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people.[53]

In his first apostolic exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium, "The Joy of the Gospel," Francis also reveals his Jesuit DNA, his concern for social justice, dedicated large part to discuss poverty, inequality, exploitation, oppression, and the need for solidarity. Although his response to social injustice includes the role of the government promoting social justice, rights, and obligations, however, he emphasizes the mercy and love of each person, a "revolution of tenderness," generated by the social sensibility of each person, ultimately collective justice should be the result of the aggregate of personal virtue.

In his apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia, "The Joy of Love," Francis focuses on another social issue: the family. Once again, it reflects Francis' spirituality, his Jesuit DNA: going to the margins, inviting all who have difficulties in their families to battle to improve them relying on spirituality, discernment, and the support of the community.

In his second encyclical Laudato si', "Praise Be to You," Francis focuses on another social issue: the environment, once again evidencing his Jesuit DNA, by proposing a solution based on an "ecological spirituality" of each person, which would generate "a culture of care," a "social love" to leave a better world for future generations.

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[53] Pope Francis, as quoted by Robert Klair Kaiser, *Inside the Jesuits*. pp. 111-112.

XI.

OUR SPIRITUALITY AND GREATNESS ARE DRIVERS OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how the ten dimensions of greatness described in previous chapters drive and empower leadership in each person and community.

These are all resources that have a positive impact on political economy and strategic management.

This exercise allows the construction of interdisciplinary thinking, where spirituality and philosophy present in this volume enrich and are enriched in an interaction with political economy, business management, ethics and corporate social responsibility.

Summary of the chapter

How can we name these ten dimensions discussed above?

The first name can be: these dimensions are outcomes of our spirituality.

If you ask yourself: what is spirituality? It is hard to respond because spirituality is invisible.

We can discover our spirituality based on its outcomes: our spirituality is reflected in our contemplative capacity that leads us to create awareness, connectivity, knowledge, wisdom, to walk a path towards transcendence, to create transcendence, to discover our values, to create love, to have a loving relationship with God and build our relationship with Him, to build relationships, to discover meanings, to transform suffering, to build discernment and the power to transform, heal and execute social actions.

A second name can be: these dimensions are part of our greatness; they make us great persons, great workers, great parents, and great friends.

Greatness refers to the dimensions, size, and degree of something. Greatness refers to the dimensions of a person in terms of our being, soul, spirit, nature, faculties, personality, emotions, resources, abilities, power, decisions, actions, behaviors, virtues, ethics, and outcomes.

A third name can be resources.

Strategic management defines resources as abilities to do something, capabilities, endowments, competencies, skills, knowledge, relationships, forces, power, behaviors, and procedures that impact the agent's performance leading to specific outcomes. If you read the list of the ten dimensions above, you will see that they can be named resources.

The benefit of calling them resources is that it allows us to connect spirituality, greatness, and leadership with political economy and strategic management, as the following chapters will do.

Resources are a critical dimension of modern political economy: economic growth and social justice are based on resources in terms of National Intellectual Capital (human, social, renewal, and process capital).

Resources are a critical dimension of modern strategic management: organizational success and social well-being are based on resources in terms of Intellectual Capital (human, social, and structural capital).

There is a mutually enriching and empowering relationship between these resources. For example, knowledge leads to discovering transcendence. Transcendence leads to building values and hierarchies of values. These values lead to building relationships and communities. These relationships transform the person and the community, build health, and promote social action. And all this leads to creating better knowledge, transcendence, and values.

The relationship between greatness and leadership

Each of the dimensions of greatness may impact each of the leadership abilities, as Figure 4 shows.

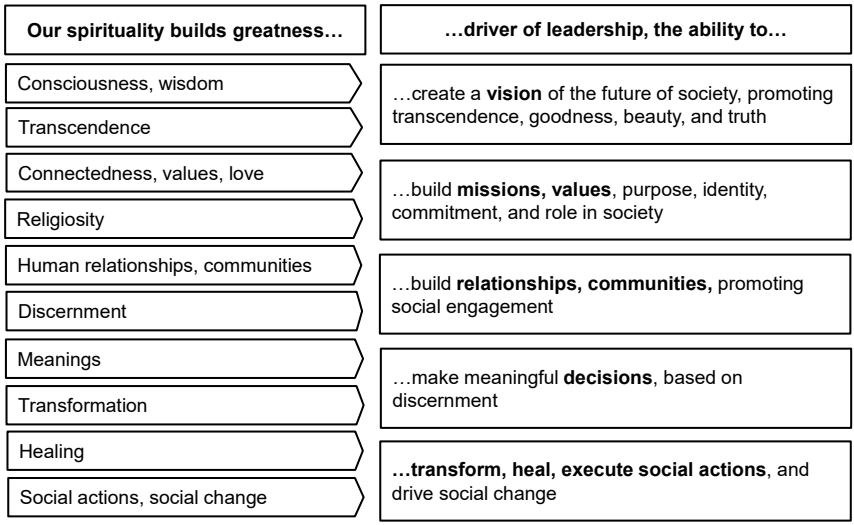
Our spirituality builds greatness…
…driver of leadership, the ability to…
Consciousness, wisdom
Transcendence
…create a **vision** of the future of society, promoting transcendence, goodness, beauty, and truth
Connectedness, values, love
Religiosity
…build **missions, values**, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society
Human relationships, communities
Discernment
…build **relationships, communities,** promoting social engagement
Meanings
Transformation
…make meaningful **decisions**, based on discernment
Healing
Social actions, social change
…transform, heal, execute social actions, and drive social change

Figure 4 Spirituality builds greatness, driver of leadership

Greatness may have some commonalities with leadership, but it is not the same concept.

One person can be great in some specific dimensions shown at the left of Figure 4 but not excel in all of them: a person can be a great parent, a great musician, a great physician, or a great friend but may not be great on other dimensions.

However, a leader must have all the abilities at the right in Figure 4. A leader who has only a vision can be a visionary or a dreamer, but not a leader. A person with values and commitment, with no vision, can be a valuable person and a great follower, but not a leader. A person with vision and values but incapable of communication and building teams cannot lead anyone. A person with no discernment can make terrible decisions. A person incapable of executing actions can be a nice person but useless for society, not a leader.

Leadership is a process that involves organizational culture, is transformational, and is ethical: the leadership of each person and community transforms cultures (volume 2), political economies (volume 3), strategic management, business ethics, and corporate social responsibility (volume 4), promoting social harmony, economic growth and social justice, social well-being and organizational success.

Every dimension of spirituality and greatness may positively impact leadership

There is a mutually enriching and empowering relationship between the dimensions of greatness and leadership. For example, knowledge, transcendence, and values promote leadership, and leadership builds and enriches knowledge, transcendence, and values. Every dimension of greatness may positively impact every dimension of leadership and vice versa.

I. Knowledge and wisdom, drivers of leadership

When we are silent, reflect, meditate, and contemplate, we strengthen our consciousness and capacity to listen to words, perceive phenomena and organize them, enlighten our knowledge, and inspire wisdom.

- **Silence, reflection, meditation, and contemplation help us to build and enrich our knowledge.**

  They connect internally and with others; it is like having big eyes, big ears, a sensitive skin, like great antennas, which help us to know ourselves and others, enrich our communication by accessing personal and community knowledge, understand symbols, discovering universal truths, building

shared knowledge and ideals among diversity and complexity.

People perceive phenomena differently and process them differently; as Howard Gardner[1] states, we all have different types of intelligence. Leaders who changed the world can develop stories embedded in the population, stories of innovation that propose a new vision. Stories are a basic human cognition, which speaks to reason and emotions.

Gardner shows how leaders are built by experiences: leaders did not necessarily have happy childhoods; many suffered isolation, lost their fathers at an early age, or had bad relationships with them. This forced them to develop "multiple intelligences"[2] and a unique ability to communicate and persuade others. Focusing on their ability to influence others, Gardner mentions how the leader must be in contact with his/her mind, thoughts, values, strategies; the leader must have a strong relationship with the community; leaders must be able to have a story to tell, have virtues that they embody.

Gardner explains how leaders must be able to develop symbols: mental symbols to enable thinking and to categorize and become ways to communicate their stories. Such symbols must be able to reach different people with different wirings, that can perceive some phenomena in different ways (the scientific, the economist, the businessperson, the humanist, the psychologist, the poet), people with high trust, realism, people with discernment, people in different roads of life.

We tend to rely on our IQ, our rational intelligence, logic, with which we solve problems.

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[1] Gardner, Howard; Laskin, Emma. *Leading minds. An anatomy of leadership*. Harper Collins. 1996. New York.

[2] Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books Publisher. 2011. New York.

But IQ is not enough: Daniel Goleman says that a leader needs emotional intelligence, EQ, which helps us to read the environment, understand people, to develop empathy. Emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness, social awareness, empathy, the ability to join intelligence, and emotions are critical dimensions of leadership, promoting a "positive impact on personal and organizational excellence."

Tony Buzan adds a third type of intelligence, SQ, spiritual intelligence, to understand the meanings and values, go to the roots, question the boundaries, transform, and create.

Leaders need IQ, EQ, and SQ. Leaders must promote IQ, EQ, and SQ in the entire organization and stakeholders.

We need mechanisms to share our diverse knowledge with diverse people, such as intuition, symbols, metaphors, hermeneutics, and analogies.

Companies use a variety of mechanisms to share knowledge, communicate and build organizational knowledge.

- **It helps to build relationships.**

But in addition to knowledge, these antennas help us build relationships by perceiving and connecting with others, understanding them, and generating feelings, emotions, and empathy. This promotes humanism, social integration, and social harmony.

Our capacity to access personal and community knowledge and wisdom involving our consciousness, our connectedness, may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, considering all reality, especially our human side.

- Our mission, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, generating the desire to become agents of creation toward transcendence and love.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, sharing universal truths, sharing ideals, and sharing a vision and mission.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, promoting our capacity to build wisdom, confronting ideas, looking for reliable sources, wise people, respected scriptures, communities that have balanced responses, building our capacity to dialogue with respected communities, people with moral authority, role models, building our capacity to assess the legitimacy of the sources of information, their authority, reliability, trustfulness.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, based on a richer awareness, connectedness, knowledge, wisdom, relationships.

This is the pillar of leadership, the capacity to build knowledge (human capital) and relationships (social capital). This is the foundation of the success of nations and business organizations.

II. The power to appreciate and create transcendence, driver of leadership

Our consciousness enlightens and inspires our appreciation of transcendence; it leads us on a journey toward transcendence and energizes our will to create transcendence.

This is what the science of leadership calls: a vision, an ideal, where we are going to, what future we imagine, providing meanings and purpose for our lives and organizations.

As persons, we need a vision of our future to be happy, an ideal, our call, our vocation, and the meaning of our life: we want to have a family, have friends, a fulfilling work, to enjoy life.

Organizations also need a vision of the future, an ideal: for 3M, the future vision is to solve problems, for Nike is to experience the thrill of competing, and for Merck is to preserve and empower human life. And these ideals last forever.

Our capacity to appreciate and create transcendence may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, leading persons and communities to transcend, be better, create, and build a better world full of beauty, goodness, truth, a world that gets closer to the Creator, to love, to perfection.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, motivating us to become agents of transformation toward transcendence and love.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, sharing the desire to create transcendence, sharing the journey toward transcendence and love, sharing the desire to become agents of transformation, the desire to cooperate in our journeys.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, our capacity to rely on spiritual exercises to discover God as a source of life and happiness, to consider our lives as a journey toward participation in God's perfections, in his love, our capacity to ponder the value of an idea, whether it leads to the right direction, the right road, leads to life, transcendence, happiness.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, and drive social change, based on a clear journey toward creating beauty, goodness, truth, love, defining goals, strategies, based

on business ethics, social ethics, corporate social responsibilities, with the motivation, the energy to perform actions and provide the resources, to generate social results.

Having a vision leads persons and organizations to create human capital (knowledge) and social capital (relationships).

III. Values, drivers of leadership

Values are engines of leadership; they are the core of a person's or organization's mission.

Leadership requires that today we have a mission that helps us to walk toward our future vision. A mission means that today, in our backpack, we have values, a role in society, commitment, and energy.

Our capacity to connect internally and with others, discovering our transcendence, and building values may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, based on our transcendence, our capacity to build values, love, and connect with human needs.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, love, empathy, compassion, role in society, as Scheler states, a social organization that journeys toward love helps promote the highest values: justice, right, beauty, knowledge and truth, and religious beliefs.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, sharing higher values, love, raising our intrinsic value, our dignity, promoting sympathy, discovering the value of the community. Values promote personal and social integration, social engagement, social commitment, respect, and generosity.

- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, our capacity to ponder the values of the person that generates ideas, to ponder the value of an idea, based on our higher-level values.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, driven by our values and virtues such as generosity, kindness, compassion, tenderness, reconciliation, willingness to help others, giving them freedom, being open to receiving their affection, caring for the weaker, the sick, the vulnerable, even choosing careers to dedicate a complete life to help the community; our happiness is not complete if we do not incorporate others' happiness.

Values are engines of knowledge and relationships, of human capital and social capital.

IV. A relationship with God, driver of leadership

Our capacity to connect with God, to experience the loving presence of God, to build our relationship with God discovering His perfections, beauty, goodness, truth, and love reflected on all creation, that He made us, He shaped us, as an artisan builds a masterpiece, we reflect his transcendence, by collaborating with His creation, transforming reality to reflect His perfections, through our daily work, as engineers, physicians, artists, parents, educators, friends, and other vocations, making reality more beneficial to humankind, by discovering his community life.

Our relationship with God may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, reflecting what we learn from Him, our understanding that we are journeying from God's love to God's love, that He made us in his image, He shaped

us, to build a vision cooperating with God's creation, an expression of his beauty, goodness, truth, to build a vision that reflects the Trinity, perfecting social reality.

- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, the missionary role of the Holy Spirit, as expressed in Isaiah 6:1-3 and Luke 4:18: "Good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, comfort all who mourn."
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, loving others based on the fact that God shaped us, we reflect his beauty, goodness, truth, and love. Our desire to imitate the Trinity builds communities, developing and perfecting the social reality, based on making it the expression of his perfection. The Trinitarian God provides a model of a community based on consciousness, knowledge, and love.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, our capacity to learn based on God's pedagogy, to have God as a guide, a leader, a companion, to understand the motions of the soul, consolation versus desolation, contemplation with an affective orientation, hearing, seeing, tasting, our capacity to involve the soul's positive and negative emotional states, fear of death, desire for health, the concern of family, images, ideas, attractions, revulsions, attitudes, aspirations. Knowing and loving Jesus leads us to follow him, and become part of his mission, his values, in the establishment of his Kingdom; joining him in his passion and death leads us to be purified, become free men, liberated from all attachments, become his instruments to help others on the same journey; joining Jesus' resurrection leads us to love and serve him in concrete ways in everyone's lives in the world, introduced into the Trinitarian life, the key of all transformation, to provide life to others.

- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change. We collaborate with God as efficient causes, makers, artisans, and manufacturers as God did with us. We collaborate with God as formal causes, imitating God's perfections and promoting social action based on God's image. We collaborate with God as final causes, as our final goal, seeking God as the ultimate beauty, goodness, and truth. Christian spirituality promotes a balance between spirituality and social action, a mutual need between contemplation and action; social action is a requirement of spirituality. The communitarian role of the Holy Spirit provides an entire platform of social action, summarized in Isaiah 6:1-3 and Luke 4:18.

Duraiswami Simon Amalorpavadass explains how the presence of God generates leadership:

> The relentless quest for the Ultimate Reality deep within through a process of interiorization and the non-stop movement towards all-round liberation and release takes in its stride the exigencies of practice of social justice. It considers it as an indispensable and inseparable condition for the attainment of moksha (release from the cycle of rebirth impelled by the law of karma). Efforts made for integral human development of all people, solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, the voiceless and powerless, involvement in the struggle for justice and creation of a new society (human, egalitarian, fraternal and just, participatory), through a process of all-round sharing with all and an all-level participation of all, is integral to the process, as both quest for God in view of realization and search for justice in view of a new society make a single concern in the same movement.[3]

[3] Amalorpavadass, Duraiswami Simon. "Integration and interiorization." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. 2016. The Netherlands. pp. 17-18.

Hubert J. M. Hermans[4] presents an interesting perspective of how creativity is empowered by mysticism, by contrasting "Rollo May's contribution to the psychological study of creativity, and Martin Buber's contribution to the understanding of mysticism":

> First, creativity and mysticism, at least in May's and Buber's views, are not separate processes, localized in different compartments of the human mind. On the contrary, the fact that the two processes have basic features in common (encounter, struggle, ecstasy, and relevance of symbols) serves as an argument to further study the two phenomena in their reciprocity.

Mysticism leads to human encounter, to dialogue, which fosters creativity:

> Second, the relationship between creativity and mysticism can be extended by taking a 'third perspective' into account: the self in its dialogical manifestations. From this perspective both creativity and mysticism can be conceived of as dialogical movements in an imaginal space. Encounter, as the main constitutive process of creativity and mysticism, can be understood in terms of dialogical movements among / positions.

Mysticism integrates the self:

> Third, given the apparent differences between creativity and mysticism (in the nature of encounter, struggle, ecstasy, and the meaning of symbols), mysticism reaches farther on the road to the ultimate integration of the self than creativity.

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[4] Hermans, Hubert J. "M. Buber on mysticism, May on creativity, and the dialogical nature of the self." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium.

Mysticism invites symbolism, which empowers creativity:

> Finally, in mysticism as in creativity, there is a vivid interest in the role of symbols as a powerful means of communication, but for the mystic the symbol is not a personal construction, but rather a revelation of the supreme Position. [5]

Mysticism promotes encounters, which promote a process of change:

> As encounters between persons may result in the emergence of new meanings, cultures and institutions are – certainly in the long run – involved in a process of change. We have learned from history that they adapt, renew themselves, or even disappear. It is hoped and expected that in the encounter of different cultures new forms of dialogue will emerge that stimulate the integration of human potentials which in their similarity and diversity belong to one another. [6]

Hermann's views contrast with modern sciences' rejection of spirituality.

V. The power to create relationships and communities, drivers of leadership

Our capacity to build human relationships and communities with social engagement may positively impact:

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[5] Hermans, Hubert J. "M. Buber on mysticism, May on creativity, and the dialogical nature of the self." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 301.

[6] Hermans, Hubert J. "M. Buber on mysticism, May on creativity, and the dialogical nature of the self." *Studies in spirituality*. Peeters. Leuven. Belgium. p. 303.

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, journeying together toward transcendence and love, perfecting society.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, the contact and relationships with others promoting empathy, compassion, the desire to care for all community members, building higher values and motivation to committing to society's happiness.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, relationships promote empathy, love generates love, relationships build relationships and social engagement, sharing vision and mission.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, a society walking together, sharing knowledge, experiences, consciousness, intuitions, feelings, searching for meanings, sharing existential understanding.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, building teams, in contact with vulnerable people, creating organizations with a social orientation.

Building relationships helps us to be leaders: leaders need to build relationships, communicate visions and missions, and promote leadership throughout the organization.

Relationships help us to build human capital: shared organizational knowledge.

Relationships help us build social capital: behaviors, institutions, commitment, trust, and the rule of law.

VI. The power to foster discernment, driver of leadership

Discernment relies on richer personal and community knowledge. We make decisions based not just on our rational intelligence but also on our emotional and spiritual intelligence. We need those

antennas we saw before, those connections, to listen to our customers, our employees, our stakeholders, to understand them, to know how they feel, to have empathy with them.

Our capacity to discern may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, reviewing personal life, discovering God as a source of life and happiness (for religious persons), and producing a personal transformation driven by God's love to impact society positively. A vision can be based on spiritual exercises, which generate a knowing mechanism, a learning process based on the experiential interaction between the person and God, on how the person can understand God's actions and discern the Spirit's motions.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, valuing reality; living according to our values which may generate desolation; putting altruistic values first and postponing more pleasurable lower values may generate desolation; it may require sacrificing pleasure and comfort.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement by sharing our discernment with those who seek the best for society.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, a practical spirituality, the Kingdom of God, the practice of mercy, participating in God's life, in his love, and in his mission according to Isaiah 6:1-3 and Luke 4:18. Discernment promotes social action, a missionary lifestyle, the mission of the "greater glory of God," oriented to the needs of the poor, the promotion of justice, faith must appear on the streets, faithful to Christ (for Christians), faithful

> to the Church, going out to the people on the margins, "with mud on their boots."[7]

Our consciousness, our connectedness, enlighten our discernment, to ponder the value of an idea, the values of the persons who provide it, and their legitimacy.

We make decisions based on our desire to journey towards transcendence and create transcendence, on our higher values and relationships.

Discernment confronts our knowledge with the knowledge of wise people, respected scriptures, and people with moral authority.

For religious people, discernment involves our relationship with God, which generates motions of the soul, consolation versus desolation. Discernment involves a spiritual exercise, knowing God, loving him, and following him by becoming part of his mission.

Discernment relies on the power to create and recreate social organizations, communities; discernment relies on the power to find the meaning of our existence, the capacity to deal with suffering; discernment fosters the power to transform, create, recreate, reform, integrate the persons and communities, fostering virtues; discernment fosters the power to produce emotional and physical health; discernment fosters the power to perform social actions, generate social change.

This is the core of leadership: making decisions based on our discernment, building human and social capital, making decisions that involve our rational, emotional, and spiritual intelligence.

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[7] Pell, George. "Interview La Stampa." As quoted by Robert Klair Kaiser, *Inside the Jesuits*. Rowan and Littlefield. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. 2014.

VII. The power to find the meaning of our existence, the capacity to deal with suffering, drivers of leadership

Our capacity to find the meaning of our existence and to deal with suffering may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, providing a meaning to our existence as creators of transcendence, helping others overcome suffering.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, as values provide meaning to our existence, and the desire to accept suffering for a higher purpose. Living according to our values may be risky; putting altruistic values first and postponing more pleasurable lower values may be painful; it may require sacrificing pleasure and comfort.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, people with shared meanings, shared sensibility, shared sufferings, and the need to connect with others: suffering leads to others' company. Suffering without the community's support can become devastating and overwhelming, and we can fall into desperation and depression. A relationship with others may generate faith, hope, and understanding.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, part of our daily spiritual exercises. Suffering may enrich our discernment: suffering may generate consciousness and wisdom; suffering can be the first step into a journey to transcendence; suffering may lead us to a more profound presence, values, and love; suffering may lead us to build stronger relationships; suffering may inspire a richer discernment. A person that suffered abuse and could overcome it may develop

a personal vision to help other people that suffered abuse. A person with addictions and could overcome it can develop a vision to help other addicts walk out of their torment. When suffering becomes meaningless, undesired, destructive, and unbearable, each dimension described above can be an extraordinary way to overcome it, find its meaning, and transform it as part of our life journey.

- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, leads to build meanings, oriented to create a better reality to helps others overcome suffering, building transcendence in a complex world.

VIII. The power to transform, driver of leadership

Our capacity to transform may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, relying on our power to transform to recreate the world, reform, integrate persons and communities, foster virtues, creating a better future.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, relying on our power to transform, promoting energy, motivation, filling our hearts, giving us life, empowering us, and strengthening us.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement, relying on our power to transform to build teams, task forces, and people willing to transform communities with communities that need such transformation power.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, relying on our power to transform part of our daily spiritual exercises, leading us to transformational journeys from and toward the love of God, participating in his communitarian mission, summarized in Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18-19: "Good news

to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, comfort all who mourn."

- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, making us passionate to create, recreate, perfect, reform, purify, and enlighten; they unite us internally and with others, building values, motivation, and love; they transform our ethics, build virtues and community-oriented behaviors, promoting social inclusion, cooperation, compassion, solidarity, and social action; they make us committed, concerned, engaged, leading us to action.

IX. The power to foster spiritual, emotional and physical health, driver of leadership

Our capacity to promote health may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, relying on our healing power to heal society spiritually, emotionally, and physically.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, relying on our healing power to build higher values, integrating the person and community, lowering anxiety and depression, and promoting better behavior, lifestyle, and general well-being.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement between healers and people who need healing.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, relying on our power to heal to find the meaning of our lives.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, relying on our power to heal to promote spiritual, emotional, and physical health.

X. The power to perform social actions, generate social change, drivers of leadership

Our capacity to perform social action may positively impact:

- Our vision of the future of society promoting transcendence, beauty, goodness, and truth, to promote social action.
- Our missions, values, purpose, identity, commitment, and role in society, connecting us with our souls and others' souls, alerting us to the need for compassion, caring for each member of the community, and the need for compassionate and loving action to serve the community.
- Our relationships and communities, promoting social engagement building teams with social action agents and communities that need social action.
- Our meaningful decisions, based on discernment, part of our daily spiritual exercises, the loving presence of God leads to the love of neighbor who deserves care and justice, a missionary lifestyle, going out to people in the margins.
- Our power to transform, heal, execute social actions, drive social change, manifested in multiple ways: social innovation, social entrepreneurship, business for social impact, microfinance, sustainability, social policies, education for the underprivileged, social healthcare, stakeholder's social responsibility, corporate citizenship, three-domain corporate social performance, corporate social responsiveness, social venture capital, socially responsible investment, social work, community development, welfare for workers, non-profit organizations, philanthropy.

XII.

THE BENEFITS OF THIS JOURNEY

For many of us, life is not easy. Most likely, many readers can feel identified with some of the groups described below. The most remarkable aspect of spirituality, greatness, and leadership is their power to transform our lives:

- People in a difficult economic situation, people who are homeless or jobless[1], or who have difficulties with work and financial instability; people living in poverty[2]; people who suffer abuse in their jobs, and young people who cannot find their first job.

  Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership positively impact the political economy by promoting economic growth and social justice; they impact decision-making, businesses, and organizations by promoting organizational success and social well-being; world peace enables and empowers economic prosperity.

- People who feel lost, disoriented, without a clear identity, without a purpose for their lives[3], especially young people.

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[1] Between 0.1% and 95%, depending on the country. *Unemployment*. CIA World Factbook. January 1, 2018. https://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?c=xx&v=74. Accessed May 2019.

[2] 10% of the world's population lives on less than $2 a day. *Poverty*. World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview. Accessed May 2019.

[3] 54% do not know or is not sure what the purpose of life is. *Survelum Public Data Bank Life Purpose Survey*. http://www.survelum.com/survey-results/life. Accessed May 2019.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership help us build knowledge and wisdom, know ourselves and others, discover and build our identity and reality, enrich our understanding of humanity, and find our place in the world.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build the power to appreciate and create transcendence, find our identity, giving meaning to our lives as creators or enjoyers of transcendence.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build consciousness, connect with our interiority and that of others, helps us to discover that we all have transcendence, value, build presence, values, relationships, and love, generate a positive appreciation of ourselves, others, and reality, discover our identity, and providing meaning to our lives.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build the power to experience the loving presence of God, a fundamental source of peace; they lead to building our relationship with God, benefiting society, and building our identity and meaning in our lives.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build human relationships, communities, and social organizations based on love and mercy, powerful sources of identity and meaning to our lives.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build discernment, which helps us overcome complex situations and find our identity and the meaning of our existence.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build the power to transform suffering, find the meaning of suffering, and find the meaning of our lives to solve suffering.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build the power to transform persons and communities, building our identity and giving meaning to our lives as agents of transformation.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build the power to provide physical, emotional, and spiritual health for us and others, building our identity and giving meaning to our lives as health agents.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build the power to perform social actions and drive social change, a great source of identity and meaning for promoters and beneficiaries of social actions.

- People born into broken families[4]-[5] or who see their own families fail,[6] lonely people;[7] people with autism[8], and people who suffer discrimination.[9]

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[4] 40.5% Percent of all births to unmarried women. Hamilton, Brady E., et al. *Births: Final 2014 data. National Vital Statistics Reports*. Volume 64, Number 12 December 23, 2015. and *Unmarried Childbearing*. National Center for Health Statistics. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/ unmarried-childbearing.htm Accessed May 2019.

[5] 84% of Colombia's children are born out of wedlock. Gill, Stephen. *84% of Colombian children are born out of wedlock*. March 12, 2016. https://colombiareports.com/84-colombias-children-born-wedlock/ Accessed May 2019.

[6] 50% chances of divorcing of US couples marrying for the first time. American Psychological Association. *Marriage and divorce*. https://www.apa.org/topics/divorce/. Accessed November 2018.

[7] 3 out of 4 Americans are lonely. Fikes, Bradley J. *The San Diego Union-Tribune* https://phys.org/news/2018-12-americans-lonely.html Accessed May 2019.

[8] About 1 in 44 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network. ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. ASD is more than 4 times more common among boys than among girls. About 1 in 6 (17%) children aged 3–17 years were diagnosed with a developmental disability, as reported by parents, during a study period of 2009-2017. These included autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, blindness, and cerebral palsy, among others. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html

One in 54 children had a diagnosis of ASD by age 8 in 2016, a nearly 10 percent increase over 2014 when the estimate was 1 in 59. https://www.autismspeaks.org/press-release/cdc-estimate-autism-prevalence-increases-nearly-10-percent-1-54-children-us

1 out of 37 boys and 1 in 151 girls are diagnosed with autism in the United States. Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S. https://tacanow.org/autism-statistics/

Autism prevalence has increased by 178% since 2000. https://tacanow.org/autism-statistics/

[9] Percent of each group saying that, generally speaking, they believe discrimination against their own group exists in America today: Black Americans 92%, Latinos 78%, Native Americans 75%, Asian Americans

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build can help connect internally and with others and develop interpersonal values, relationships, communities, healing, and transformation.

- People with emotional struggles,[10] anxiety,[11] depression,[12] and suicidal.[13]

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build can help heal emotions, transform us, and teach us to live, be happy, to process suffering.

61%, women 68%, LGBTQ 90%. *Discrimination in America: Final Summary*. Survey conducted for National Public Radio, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

[10] 25% people are affected by mental disorders. *World Health Report*. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/whr/2001/media_centre/press_release/en/ Accessed May 2019.

Prevalence of any mental illness (AMI). National Institute of Mental Health. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml. Accessed May 2019.

[11] 19.1% of U.S. adults had any anxiety disorder in the past year, 31.1% of U.S. adults experience any anxiety disorder at some time in their lives. National Comorbidity Study. National Institute of Mental Health. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder#:~:text=Prevalence%20of%20Any%20Anxiety%20Disorder%20Among%20Adults,-Based%20on%20diagnostic&text=An%20estimated%2019.1%25%20of%20U.S.,than%20for%20males%20(14.3%25

[12] People suffering with depression: average 7%, teenage females 20%. *National Institute of Mental Health*. www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml Accessed May 2019.

[13] During 2020: 13.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in the USA. Garnett, Matthew F., M.P.H.; Curtin, Sally C., M.A.; Stone Deborah M., Sc.D. *Suicide Mortality in the United States, 2000–2020*. NCHS Data Brief No. 433. Centers for Disease Control. March 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db433.htm#Summary

- People with addictions[14] who feel unable to overcome them.[15]

  Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build can help heal and be free from addictions.

- People who suffer sexual abuse, physical violence, harassment,[16] and psychological aggression.[17]

  Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build can help heal the wounds of sexual and emotional abuse and reconnect with the community.

- People who live surrounded by dishonesty, corruption, and lies.

  Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build can help transform the person and community, developing values and virtues.

- People who suffer wars and genocides, who must emigrate because of violence, or are surrounded by violence and crime.

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14 People with addictions: 6% of the population. *Addiction Statistics*. Addiction Center. https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/addiction-statistics/ Accessed May 2019.

15 People unable to recover from alcoholism: 96%. *Addiction Statistics*. Addiction Center. https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/addiction-statistics/ . Accessed May 2019.

16 On average, more than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men in the US will experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner. *Facts and figures*. National Domestic Violence Hotline. https://www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/ Accessed May 2019.

17 48%. Ibid.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build can help integrate society, create community, and provide peace and happiness.

- Societies and nations are confronted because of cultural opposites, traditions, history, ideologies, and opposite political economies.

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership build a realist epistemology, helping to eliminate cultural opposites.

Spirituality, greatness, and leadership are crucial for our happiness and well-being, especially for vulnerable people who struggle and suffer.

Toward world peace

Spirituality, greatness, and leadership promote world peace.

Antony Adolf[18] considers that personal needs impact world peace. Following Adolf's insights, spirituality, greatness, and leadership promote world peace by driving inner peace (spiritual and intellectual attainment, recognition and respect, quietude, and plenitude): "there can be no peace without but through peace within":

Tranquility, calmness and stillness have long been and still are characteristics strongly associated with inner peace, as well as with the natural, social and collective states conducive to it.

Individually, recognition and respect successively derive from or against family, community, education, professions,

[18] Adolf, Antony. *Peace. A World History*. Polity Press. 2009

states, the media, and religious, regional and world bodies, without which the most successful peacemakers in world history could not have achieved what they did.

The most elusive and yet most sought-after components of inner peace are probably spiritual and intellectual attainment. Religious imperatives of peace are related to but distinguished from spiritual imperatives. The former organize, systemize and make prescriptions of the latter only after the latter have been proven.[19]

Our spirituality, greatness, and leadership promote world peace

World peace results from involving spirituality, consciousness, meditation, and contemplation in our knowledge creation (chapter I), creating a richer knowledge with a human orientation, connecting us internally and with others, enhancing our perceptions, helping to know the truth, enriching our communication, integrating persons and communities, building shared knowledge and ideals among diversity and complexity, generating emotional feelings, reducing personal and social fragmentation, promoting humanism, social integration, and social harmony, producing personal inner peace and social peace and harmony.

World peace results from spirituality enlightening and inspiring our appreciation of transcendence (chapter II), leading us on a shared journey toward creating transcendence and love.

World peace results from our conscience, connecting us with our inner self and others, building higher values (chapter III), reintegrating spirituality, psychology, and morality, building affections, building trust, reducing cultural opposites, and promoting social harmony.

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[19] Ibid. pp. 244, 245.

World peace results from our capacity to connect with God and experience God's loving presence in our life's journeys (chapter IV), promoting inner peace, love, forgiveness, compassion, community building, social integration, the golden rule, and eliminating disruptive emotions.

World peace is the result of building our relationship with God by discovering God's perfections, transcendence, and love, realizing that we are his masterpieces, made in his image, collaborating with his creation, transforming reality, and making reality more beneficial to humankind, building community life and perform social actions.

World peace results from our consciousness making us relational (chapter V), generating feelings, values, and love, which lead us to build relationships, and communities, promoting social integration, social commitment, and social harmony.

World peace results from our discernment (chapter VI), relying on our rational, emotional and spiritual intelligences, and the dimensions of spirituality discussed in this book, consciousness, better knowledge, life journey, higher values, religiosity, and our relationships and communities, leading to social transformation and social action.

World peace results from our spirituality providing meaning to our lives (chapter VI), considering our existence as a journey to transcendence and love; it results from accepting suffering for a higher purpose, as part of our growing spiritually, as part of non-attachment, as part of our journey towards transcendence and love, of our journey towards God, as part of living a life with values, as part of our relationships, as part of our transformation, as part of social actions, accepting suffering to test our authenticity, overcoming and transforming suffering.

World peace results from our transformational journeys (chapter VIII), making us passionate to create, recreate, perfect, reform, purify, enlighten, uniting us internally and with others, building values,

motivation, and love, transforming our ethics, promoting social inclusion, cooperation, compassion, solidarity, and social action.

World peace results from our physical, emotional, and spiritual healing (chapter IX) and our role in helping others in their healing.

World peace results from our social action (chapter X), connecting us with our souls and others' souls, alerting us to the need for compassion, valuing and serving the community, and involving us in modern life's complexities, promoting social action, a missionary lifestyle, going out to people in the margins.

The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 102 times to 137 Nobel Prize laureates between 1901 and 2021, 109 individuals and 28 organizations. Analyzing the winners of the Prize provides a valuable understanding of what drives world peace.

Probably all Nobel Peace Prize winners can be classified as expression of greatness and leadership, as this volume discusses above, such as Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad ("for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict"), Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai ("for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education"), Médecins Sans Frontières ("in recognition of the organization's pioneering humanitarian work on several continents"), Rigoberta Menchú Tum ("for her struggle for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples"), The 14th Dalai Lama ("for advocating peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people"), Desmond Mpilo Tutu ("for his role as a unifying leader figure in the nonviolent campaign to resolve the problem of apartheid in South Africa"), Mother Teresa ("for her work for bringing help to suffering humanity"), Martin Luther King Jr. ("for his non-violent struggle for civil rights for the Afro-American population"), Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank ("for their efforts to create economic and social development from below"), among many others.

Peace driven by personal needs

Antony Adolf[20] provides an articulated view of world peace based on Abraham Maslow's pyramid of human needs and motives; the levels below are prerequisites of the levels above:

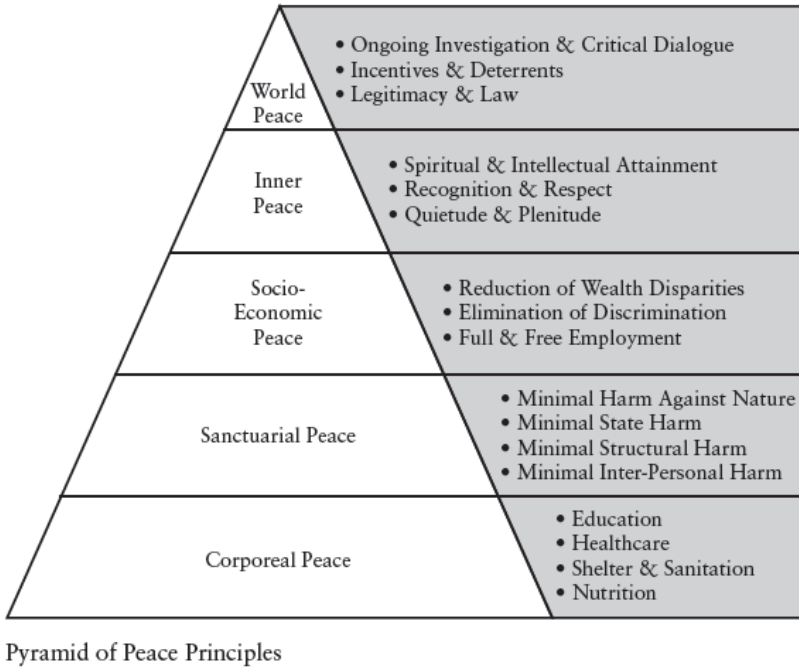

Figure 5 Piramid of Peace[21]

According to Adolf, world peace results from:

- Corporeal Peace. Without the well-being of our bodies and minds, world peace is an irrelevancy.

[20] Adolf, Antony. *Peace. A World History*. Polity Press. 2009
[21] Ibid. p. 235.

- Sanctuarial Peace. Without tangible assurances and reason to believe that intentional harm is unlikely to be done to us as individuals or groups, world peace is no less a mirage than the promise of bodily and mental wellbeing.
- Socio-Economic Peace. How we live and work with each other (or not) as individuals and groups determine whether peace is achievable and the forms it takes.
- Inner Peace. There can be no peace without but through peace within. Peace within societies is essential for peace between them; in the same vein, inner peace on individual, social and collective levels are prerequisites for world peace.
- World Peace. World peace must facilitate the Pyramid's previous peaces by aiding their adaptation to conditions and participants as circumstances require. Crucé's analogy between humanity and the human body, the organs of which are in such sympathy with each other that the sickness of one affects the other, takes on its full meanings in the levels below and culminates in world peace not the other way around.

    - Legitimacy and Law refer to the need for legitimate laws and law enforcement crucial to peace.
    - Incentives and Deterrents refer to economic and political sanctions and rewards to maintain peace.
    - Ongoing Investigation and Critical Dialogue refer to promoting dialogue, innovation, and adaptation to promote solutions to social issues.[22]

Adolf concludes:

> If the world history of peace should teach us only one thing, it is this: like putting together a puzzle the design of which cannot be

[22] Ibid. pp. 235-247.

known because it is always already changing, actualizing world peace lies in continually configuring and reconfiguring the world's peaces into a dynamic whole rather than forcing all of them to fit into a static one[23].

Peace driven by the person and society

According to Sharp[24] "most theories about the cause of war fall into one of two major conventional schools of thought: the first attributes war to 'innate biological and psychological factors or drives' and the second to 'social relations and institutions.'"

Sharp's first approach focuses on the role of religions, which lead to world peace by promoting inner peace, love, forgiveness, compassion, community building, social integration, the golden rule, and the elimination of disruptive emotions.

The Dalai Lama summarizes the view that peace starts in the human soul:

> When we rise in the morning and listen to the radio or read the newspaper, we are confronted with the same sad news: violence, crime, wars, and disasters. I cannot recall a single day without a report of something terrible happening somewhere.
>
> I am sure that many people share my concern about the present worldwide moral crisis and will join in my appeal to all humanitarians and religious practitioners who also share this concern to help make our societies more compassionate, just, and equitable. From this perspective I share with you my personal outlook - that:

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[23] Ibid. p. 248.

[24] Sharp, Dr. Walter Gary. Democracy and Deterrence. Foundations for an Enduring World Peace. Air University Press. Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. 2008.

1. Universal humanitarianism is essential to solve global problems;
2. Compassion is the pillar of world peace;
3. All world religions are already for world peace in this way, as are all humanitarians of whatever ideology;
4. Each individual has a universal responsibility to shape institutions to serve human needs.[25]

Samuel Huntington in the famous article "The Clash of Civilizations" defended that culture is the most relevant source of global conflict:

> It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.[26]

According to Huntington, civilizations will clash because:

> First, differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion. The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group,

[25] Dalai Lama. A Human Approach to World Peace. https://www.dalailama.com/messages/world-peace/a-human-approach-to-world-peace

[26] Huntington, Samuel. The Clash of Civilizations? Foreign Affairs. New York.Vol.72, Iss. 3; pg. 22, 28 pgs. 1993.

the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.

Second, the world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing; these increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.

Third, the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from long-standing local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labeled "fundamentalist."

Fourth, the growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West On the one hand, the West is at a peak of power. At the same time, however, and perhaps as a result, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations.

Fifth, cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones.

Finally, economic regionalism is increasing.

The UNESCO's Constitution (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) responds to the personal and social approaches by declaring:

> That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed;

That ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;

That the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races;

That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern;

That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

For these reasons, the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives.[27]

[27] UNESCO. Text of the Constitution. https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution November 16, 1945.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

May this book help us discover our spirituality, make it visible and teach us how to strengthen it.

May this book help us discover how spirituality inspires us, as our daily breath nourishes our body and soul: spirituality inspires and enlightens our wisdom, fills our heart, teaches us to live, makes us more human, gives us energy to live, gives us peace, heals our soul, transforms us and our communities, gives us freedom and happiness.

May it help us to live our lives positively, happily, with greatness and leadership.

The following two volumes ground these reflections, how spirituality, greatness and leadership help transform the political economy promoting economic growth and social justice, and help transform decision making, strategic management, ethics and corporate social responsibility promoting organizational success and social well-being.